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THE

GOOD SHEPHERD

IN TWELVE CHAPTERS

Embracing the Twenty-Third Psalm.

BY

JAMES B. ALLAN.

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PREFACE.

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THE following pages have been written to strengthen the believer, to restore the backslider, to convert the unbeliever, and to turn the sceptic from his dark and comfortless negations. Reader, to which of these four classes do you belong? Happy, indeed, if you can claim kindred with the first of these; miserable, if you are the companion of any of the others. Whatever be your state, whether of darkness or of light, it is hoped that by a careful perusal of this little work you will find such a statement of truth as shall meet the wants of your spiritual condition. How far the writer has succeeded in his object, must be left to the judgment of the intelligent reader to determine. It is, however, earnestly and prayerfully hoped that this beautiful song of Zion, together with its meditations, may be made instrumental, in the hand of God, in turning the wanderer into the paths of righteousness, and in comforting the follower of the meek and humble Nazarene.

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SECTION I.

The Believer's Experience of God's Love and Care.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

CHAPTER I.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE CONSTANCY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"The Lord is my Shepherd."

THIS little song of Zion is sometimes called the Children's Psalm. Thousands of little ones have often repeated its beautiful lines, and, with their sweet silvery voices, have lisped it at a throne of grace. It has been the channel through which many a young heart has sent up to the Good Shepherd the incense of faith and love. It is just such a heavenly song as every babe in Jesus would desire to sing. It has been so dipped in the loving heart of God that it is difficult to repeat it without being made sensible of the rich grace which it contains.

To those who have loved its measures in their infancy it must still continue to be dear. God's Word, when planted in a young heart, loses none of its loveliness through the lapse of years. It is not like the flower which comes forth in its freshness, blooms for a season, and then fades and dies. No; there is a life in the truth, an immortality in it, a divinity in it which, when received into the heart by faith, gives life and immortality. God's Word is the moral image

of Himself; and, when once established in the soul, unites us to the Great Shepherd of the sheep, and enables us to say the Lord is our Shepherd.

Amongst the Jews the office of shepherd was one of great honour and trust, as the flock was often very numerous. To be shepherds, princes did not think it beneath their dignity. Mesha, king of Moab, was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel a hundred thousand lambs, and a hundred thousand rams with the wool as yearly dues. Saul, too, was a sheep-master, and gave Doeg the charge of his whole pastoral establishment. David, before he ascended the throne, "followed the sheep;" and, while in this office, was anointed king over Israel. Moses, when an exile, wandered on the lofty steeps of Sinai, and tended the flock of Jethro, his father-in-law. Such an occupation was not beneath the dignity of the man who was the adopted son of an Egyptian princess. In ancient times it was not unusual for kings to be shepherds. Intimations of this fact are not unfrequent also in profane history.

To the Jew, therefore, the religious use of the word shepherd was not only well understood, but also easy and beautiful in its application. From his childhood he knew its duties and cares. He was reared in the midst of flocks and herds. The bleatings of the sheep, their exposure to the wolf, and their proneness to wander, were matters of every day's experience. These would form part of his youthful associations, and become stronger and dearer with his advancing years. In such circumstances the God of Israel, represented as the Shepherd of his people, would, therefore, impress the Jewish mind with a sense of beauty and power, which those in a commercial land cannot expect to feel.

But the tie which subsisted between the shepherd and the sheep was of a more endearing character than what is

seen in Western climes. It was a tie of love rather than a tie of fear. In the East the sheep have confidence in the shepherd, and, at his approach, feel no alarm. They know the friendly tones of his voice; and, when he calls them by their names, are ready to follow him. But the voice of a stranger they regard not, for they know that he is not the shepherd of the sheep. A missionary who was in Greece says that he was once passing a flock of sheep in that interesting land; and, being informed that the sheep would obey the call of the shepherd, he asked him to summon one of them. As soon as the sheep heard its name, it left its pasturage, and approached the hand ot the shepherd with a prompt obedience which he had never seen in any other of the kind. An ancient Jewish writer, born in Egypt, and well acquainted with its customs, states that in the season of shearing, the sheep would run to the shepherd at his call, and, stooping a little, put themselves into his hands to be shorn. During this proceeding they remain quiet and submissive. In the lambing season it is usual for the shepherds to carry the lambs in their bosom, and to lead their dams which give them suck as they require. The lambs being feeble and unfit to follow the flock, are nursed with tender care until they are able to accompany their mothers. The beauty and power of the expression, "The Lord is my Shepherd," cannot, therefore, be adequately felt in Western lands, even by those who are daily accustomed to the cares of a shepherd's life.

In the Old Testament the religious use of the word shepherd is not confined to the Twenty-third Psalm. It is used by David in another song of Zion, in which he pours out the earnest desires of his soul for the Church: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock: Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine

forth." Jeremiah, whose life seemed so full of sorrow, employs it in a similar way, in foretelling the restoration of Israel: "Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattereth Israel will gather him and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock." Ezekiel, who was remarkable for the lofty visions which he had of God, also speaks of him as a Shepherd: "For thus saith the Lord God, behold I, even I, will both search my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock by day, so will I seek out my sheep and deliver them out of all places, where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. I will feed them in a good pasture, and upon the high mountains of Israel shall their fold be. There shall they lie in a good fold, and in a fat pasture shall they feed upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and cause them to lie down, saith the Lord." Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, perhaps the most sublime of the prophetic circle, speaks likewise of God as a Shepherd, in a tender and beautiful manner: "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Amongst a people so much accustomed to tend the flock no form of speech could be better adapted to impress their minds. The young as well as the old, the ignorant as well as the learned, the rude Galilean, as well as the Rabbi, would at once perceive its spirituality, and feel the excellency of its power. The Lord thus speaking by the prophets to his people, the weakest understanding could plead no excuse. Whether they cast their eyes into the valley, or raised them to the mountain, they beheld the shepherd and his sheep, and were reminded of the tender care of God. Everywhere were seen the emblems of his love, appealing to their hearts and con-

sciences, and demanding an enlightened and a cordial obedience. As in the wilderness, the pillar of cloud and fire was ever present to the tribes; so, in their own dear land, these pastoral symbols were ever before them. They were as frontlets between their eyes. God's affectionate care was thus seen in the chief occupation of their land, and was fitted to preserve in their hearts the memory of his constant care.

Constancy was a requisite qualification of the shepherd. It was not sufficient to tend the flock during the hours of day. The night, also, had its cares. The sheep were not only feeble and defenceless, but ever ready to go astray. Great watchfulness on the part of the keeper was always required. Hence was Jacob's complaint to his uncle Laban: "Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes." In the plains of Bethlehem the shepherds whom the angel addressed "were keeping watch over their flock by night." The sheep when gathered even into the fold required an attentive eye. There was the thief and robber "that entered not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbed up some other way." To guard against this evil, there was the watch-tower which overlooked the fold. On its summit stood the shepherd and kept watch during the still hours of the night. Within the circle of the fold, reposed in peace, the numerous flock around which were gathered his joys, his fears, his cares. There lay the treasures of his interest, that made him expose himself to danger, and bear the chill and hoarfrost by night. How necessary to the safety of the sheep was the constant watchfulness of the keeper!

So is it with the Great Shepherd and the sheep of his pasture. He is always with them. In the sunshine and in the shade, in the night and in the day, they are the

objects of his constant care. He is with them in the day of trouble and the hour of darkness, saying to them,—"*I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee.*" "*When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they will not overflow thee; and when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee.*" "*I will be with thee even unto the end.*" "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love; and with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.*" "*The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but my loving-kindness shall not depart.*" "*Fear not, for I am with thee; I will keep thee as the apple of mine eye.*" "*A woman may forget her sucking-child, and she may cease to have compassion on the son of her womb, yet will I not forget thee.*" Thus speaks the Keeper of Israel, that the sheep of his pasture may have lasting confidence in his unceasing care. His love is not like that of our fellow-creatures, changing with changing circumstances. The loss of riches, and rank, and power, affect Him not; neither do they cause Him to withdraw his love. To Him all the honours of time are but as the small dust upon the balance, or as chaff before the breath of the summer's wind. To his beloved, *he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.* How many voices cry aloud and speak of his constancy! The spring comes forth and proclaims it in the language of its young flowers. The summer rejoices in it with its luxuriant voices. The autumn, too, bears witness to it with its abundant fruits and its fields of yellow grain. Neither does the winter lack its dark and dreary testimony. The tides of the deep, as they rush from shore to shore, proclaim it with their hollow voices. And the winds of heaven—the unseen messengers which run the errands of their Lord—cry aloud of his constancy, whether in the rude, rough blast, or in the soft, gentle breeze. Does not the lily come forth and speak

of it in its own beautiful phrase? Is not its rich, delicate, and more than royal attire, which it sports through its summer holiday, a witness of it? Does not its simple tale through ages, long gone by, say that it is lasting as the hills? Neither are the fowls of the air silent witnesses. They warble their wild notes as sweetly now as when they were first taught to tune their harps in the earthly paradise.

But these are not the only vouchers of God's constancy to his beloved. We are not left to spell our way through the emblems of nature, through the mystic voices of the winds, the tides, the flowers, the seasons of the year. There is a surer word of prophecy, so sure, that *he who runneth may read.* God has spoken to us through human experience, through that of Israel, the ancient flock of his pasture. How wonderful their tale! How eventful their rise! God's dealings with them, how mysterious! Such is not a record of yesterday —of a few years; but it looks back through time for more than thirty centuries. It is not a narrative, containing some incidents in common life; but it is the history of a great and peculiar nation. To no people has God's care been so wonderfully shown as to the seed of Abraham. Whether we follow them into Egypt, or trace their footsteps through the wilderness, or mark their entrance into the promised land, we see the Great Shepherd gently leading his flock. How strange the events that led them into Egypt! A dream of the night, an ominous dream, passed over the young spirit of the patriarch's favourite boy. It was a dream of empire, in which the sun, the moon, the eleven stars, and the sheaves of the harvest-field foretold his greatness. The visions came from heaven, and signified the eminence of the boy-dreamer. But more, God, by these, promised to the patriarch and his children a home, which would shield them from the sore famine that was soon to follow. The Good Shepherd was

opening new pastures for his sheep; and for this end sent his young servant before them by a rough, mysterious path —a path encompassed with snares, conspiracy, and the shadow of death. Torn by fraternal hands from the embraces of a doating father, sold to the stranger to become a cowering slave, accused of crime having no ground in truth, and, as a punishment, consigned to the cold, dark vaults of an Egyptian dungeon, he felt that he was *led by a way that he knew not*, and through paths which were unknown. Though he knew it not, he was opening a way of deliverance. God was training him in adversity, that he might not forget him in prosperity. His path had been full of briars; now it was covered with roses. Strange providences came to pass. The dungeon was changed for the palace; the prison attire for the prince's robe; the disgraceful fetter for the royal ring; and the petty underling of the prison into the ruler of a great nation. In the hand of God he became the saviour of his father's house, and brought them into Egypt *to eat the fat of the land.* The Good Shepherd, going before his sheep, led them forth, and made them lie down in the green pastures of Goshen. In that land —once the home of art and science and grandeur and idolatry—dwelt the children of Israel four hundred and fifty years. That period was not one of continued joy. There *arose a king who knew not Joseph.* His services were forgotten. His brethren were despised and treated as slaves. Hard was this bondage. Many a sigh and groan and bitter lamentation broke forth from the breast of the Hebrew slave, but were not unheard by Him who compassionates the poor and oppressed. Through the tyranny of the Egyptian, the Great Shepherd was gathering together the hearts of his beloved, and preparing them for new pastures into which he was soon to lead them. In

his dealings with his people, he first humbles, then raises them; and makes the trying events of his providence the foundation of blessing. To them affliction is the corner-stone of future prosperity and greatness. The tottering-house must be pulled down before it can be rebuilt. As sin and inexperience are the causes of our misery, so misery becomes instrumental in the hand of God in improving the heart, in extending our knowledge, and in advancing our happiness. So was it with Israel: The Lord was making the hard taskmaster fulfil his wise and benevolent designs.

Far on the steeps of Sinai was seen a Hebrew refugee tending his fleecy care. His zeal for his countrty had endangered his life, and made him seek shelter under the roof of a Midian priest. While engaged in his pastoral duties, he beheld a strange sight, *a bush burned, but consumed not.* Filled with wonder, he drew near, anxious to solve the mystery. From the midst of the fire, came forth a voice, saying, "Return to Egypt, deliver my people, and conduct them to the land which I promised to their fathers. I will be a mouth of wisdom to thee; I will clothe thee with excellence and might, and make thee a god unto Pharoah." Obedient to the Divine command, he returned to Egypt to witness new scenes of tyranny and sorrow. Invested with miraculous power, and guided by Divine wisdom, he demanded the freedom of his brethren. The tyrant refused. Egypt became the scene of judgment. Ten fearful plagues swept over the land, and filled it with death and desolation. The Egyptian became alarmed, the throne trembled, the slave dropped his fetters, and the ransomed of the Lord went forth free. Behold the constancy of Israel's Keeper! How wonderful his care! Over his peculiar ones was his eye, and in the day of wrath he hid them in the folds of his garments. Goshen was the fold of his love, and was as the

Garden of Eden. No plague stepped across its boundaries; neither did the angel of death lay his hand on the first-born. He was with them in the deep waters, and constrained the Red Sea to gather up her imperial robes, and permit His redeemed to walk in safety over the rough floor of her ocean palace. *Having bared his right arm, he overthrew them that rose against him. They sank as lead in the mighty waters. Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*

Delivered from bondage and the fear of Egyptian rule, the ransomed of the Lord wandered in the wilderness forty years. During that time their march to Canaan seemed devious and wild. Backwards and forwards in many a winding path they went, as if they followed the trail of some capricious serpent of the desert. Yet, in all their changes from place to place, they were under the guidance of that eye which *neither slumbers nor sleeps.* There was a design, a great design, accomplished by Israel's delay in the wilderness. To them the solitude of the desert was a school of judgment, and mercy, and miracle, to prepare them for the land of promise, and to make them a light to the dark nations of the world. Prone to idolatry, and obstinate and rebellious, there they were instructed, chastised, and trained. Away from the haunts of Gentile vice, and from the corrupting manners of the age, God was preparing a people to serve him in righteousness. Sin, like a garment, covered the earth. Idolatry abounded. The knowledge of God was lost. For wickedness he had destroyed the old world; in mercy he would save the new. For this end he chose Israel whom he honoured, enlightened, and cherished, and made them the bow of promise to the dark nations of the world. There, in the still depths of the wilderness, he taught them heavenly truth, raised

their grovelling minds, and gave them elevating views of his own character. Such a display of his constancy and care was not to the Jew only, but it was a standing memorial to the Church through all ages to come. Here the Christian can turn the eye of faith, and behold the special providence of God in sustaining his people: and, in the day of loss and poverty, in the dark day, can feel confidence in that hand which fed the wanderers of the desert. From the many judgments which fell upon Israel for impurity, murmuring, and rebellion, he can also feel his deep responsibility to God, warning him to maintain a life of purity, resignation, and submission. The long sojourn in the wilderness, instead of being a curse, was a distinguishing proof of God's fatherly love to Israel; while, at the same time, it was a blessing to the human race.

But God did not leave his people at the close of these forty years. He was with them still. Neither did the cloud forsake them by day, nor the pillar of fire by night. The waters of the Jordan bore witness to his presence and power, as well as those of the Red Sea. For as soon as the foot of the Levite touched the shallows of the river, a path at once appeared. The inspired penman says, "The waters which came down from above stood and rose up upon a heap, very far from the city Adam, that is beside Zaretan: and those that came down towards the sea of the plain, even the salt sea, failed, and were cut off, and the people passed over right against Jericho. And the priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan, and all the Israelites passed over on dry ground, until all the people were passed clean over Jordan." By the miraculous passage of the Jordan, God gave to the relapsing Jew another proof of his continued favour and support. This was necessary in entering

a land full of enemies who were gathering up their strength to oppose the invader. At the same time, the fact that the river had been crossed in such a wonderful manner would depress the mind of the Canaanite, and awaken his fears. Jericho, a large and populous city, only second in importance to Jerusalem, and situated near the Jordan, was filled with alarm. The inhabitants, probably, having witnessed the passage of the river, and having seen the plain full of armed men, were struck with terror, and fled within their walls. In a few days more that city, so full of life, and hope, and stir, and which seemed, by its lofty walls, to bid defiance to the besieger, was a scene of ruin and desolation. Thus God magnified his favour to Israel, in overthrowing the defences of the city, and in giving them an easy victory over their enemies.

But the case of Israel's Keeper did not end here. His promise which he gave to their fathers was not yet fulfilled. The flock had just entered the pasture-ground. Jericho and Ai were but the earnest of the promised inheritance. There lay before them the long-expected land, with its flocks and herds, its fertile fields, its vine-clad hills, and all its beautiful landscapes. The dream of ages was now being fulfilled. Faith had become sight, and hope had grown into reality. To the wanderer of the desert how delightful the prospect! Instead of the barren wild, there was the land flowing with milk and honey. To him, lately so homeless, so unsettled, how pleasant the thought of a certain dwelling-place! A home, a happy home, with its dreamy joys, in a land of liberty and palm-trees, how enchanting to the mind of the tempest-tossed Jew! No more to roam the desert and bear the chills of winter and the heats of summer; no more to suffer the inconveniences of camp-life and be exposed to the fiery flying serpent, how

pleasing to the heart of the wanderer! The golden age of Israel was beginning to dawn. Prosperous and happy years lay before them. Bright prospects were in the distance. But before these became a joyous reality, much opposition and struggle remained. Roused by a sense of danger, the ancient inhabitant of the land was gathering up his strength to repel the advancing enemy. The contest, however, was unequal. The Lord was with Israel. In vain, therefore, did the numerous kings of the land counsel together, and devise their plans of victory. In vain did the princes unite their forces, and lead them against the hosts of the Lord. In vain did the votary of Baal call upon his God in the day of battle to succour him and to grant him victory. In vain did the sacrifice bleed on the altar of Baal, and the priest invoke the aid of his God. In vain was the valour and might of Canaan aroused to deeds of daring and led on to conquer. Everywhere the fields were covered with the dying and the dead. For a whole day the sun stood still in heaven, looked down on the plains of Gibeon, and beheld the slaughtered hosts of the Canaanites. The moon, too, paused in her course, and shed her light on the valley of Ajalon to enable the Israelite to complete the slaughter of the Idolater. Thus did God manifest his constancy to his people in the day of battle in giving them victory over all their enemies.

But has God not sometimes forsaken his people, and suffered the enemy to oppress them? Yes, they have been afflicted, but not forsaken. Adversity is no proper mark that God has withdrawn his love, and become the enemy of his people. Adversity is frequently, if not always, a blessing. It softens the heart, expands the social feelings, and teaches us many useful lessons how we should conduct ourselves. It humbles pride, that which God hates and

resists, and teaches us the knowledge of ourselves. Without adversity man would become impious, presumptuous, and utterly selfish. Perhaps the greatest curse which can fall upon a man is the curse of unbroken prosperity. Such, however, is looked upon by most men as the perfection of human bliss. In their fallen condition they readily conclude that happiness chiefly consists in whatever gratifies the appetites, dazzles the imagination, or extends power. When the course of events are such as, in a great measure, to prohibit indulgences of this kind, human nature too often rushes to the conclusion that its earthly well-being is destroyed. As well, perhaps, with more truth might the bedrid patient conclude that the bitter draught prescribed by the physician was destructive to health and life. As well might the schoolboy, whining at his task, conclude that the course of his education destroyed his happiness. As well might a father conclude that, in applying the rod, his affections were withdrawn from his beloved but erring boy. Paul says, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." Often have Israel been chastened. Often have they groaned under the heel of the oppressor, and bewailed the desolation which has fallen upon them. Torn from their homes by the spoiler, and led into captivity, they have sat by the river of Babylon, and bewailed their unhappy condition. Sad and desponding, as if no more to behold their loved festivals, or sing the sacred song of Zion, they have hung the harp on the willow-tree, and wept over the faded glories of their native land. The daughter of Zion has been trodden as a wine-press. She has mourned as a widow, and her tears have been upon her cheeks as she sat under the palm-tree. The altar has been cast down, and the bear from the wilderness has wasted her vineyard. A cloud and darkness

have gathered over her, and her beauty has become the spoil of the robber. She has sat in the solitary place, and sighed over the pleasing memories of other years. How is the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed! How are the precious sons of Zion, who were as fine gold, become as earthen pitchers, the work of the potter's hands!

But Israel, though now scattered through the earth, and despised by the nations, are yet the subjects of God's promises and care. As a distinct people in the world, remarkable indeed has been their preservation. While other tribes and races have met and mingled, and lost their distinctive character, Israel have remained a separate and peculiar people. There is not on record another people who, in similar circumstances, have maintained the same unity and purity of race. Without a country, without a government, mixed with the people of all lands, oppressed and persecuted beyond all others, they have for nearly eighteen hundred years maintained an unbroken line of Jewish descent. It is hard to account for this on merely human principles. It is hard, in reflecting on such a subject, to exclude from the mind the working of a superior Power. There is no such example in the experience of any other nation. The Jews stand alone. The conclusion readily forces itself upon us, that it is God's care which has preserved his people, and, amidst the changes and revolutions of states and empires, has kept from destruction the sheep of his pasture, as a memorial of his constant love. If, in this wonderful manner, the Great Shepherd has for so long a time preserved his people, it is not unreasonable to conclude that, in some part of the earth, he has in reserve for them a certain pasture ground. It is not quite easy to perceive the wisdom and benevolence of a design, which consists in keeping a people separate and scattered through the world, and with no prospect of bringing

them to a final resting-place. On the contrary, it seems more in accordance with the character of a wise and merciful God, to suppose that he is leading them to a land that they shall inherit, and in which they shall be governed by their own laws. This view of the subject is not unscriptural. There appears to be some grounds for it in the Old Testament. The prophet Hosea certainly favours the idea, and seems to have foreseen the important event of Israel's return to their own land. In the third chapter he says, "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without a teraphim. Afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God, and David, their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." The Chaldee reads the latter part of this passage thus: "they shall seek the service of the Lord their God, and shall obey Messiah, the son of David, their king."

Ezekiel, in the 37th chapter of his prophecies, speaks more fully on the subject and says, "Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen whether they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall no more be two nations; neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all; neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them, so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David, my servant, shall be king over them; and they shall have one shepherd. They shall also walk in my judg-

ments and observe my statutes, and do them; and they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob, my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever." In the 34th chapter of the same book of prophecy, the inspired writer also says: "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them." In the 30th chapter of Jeremiah, there is a passage of the same import: "They shall serve the Lord their God," says the prophet, "and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore, fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid."

These passages speak of a blessed time in the future history of Israel. They are not to be for ever the reproach of all nations, and exiles from the land of their fathers. Long though they have been in the wilderness, yet before them lies a happy Canaan. Awaiting them there is still a golden age. The Lord has spoken it. Israel shall be *taken from among the heathen, gathered from every side*, and *brought into their own land.* No more shall the Gentile oppress, or lead them into captivity. They shall dwell in the *mountains of Israel for ever. Jacob shall be in rest, and none shall make him afraid.* Once more shall the harp of Judah awake, and awake to nobler strains than those of Moses. The solemn feast shall pass away. The sacrifice shall cease to bleed upon the altar. The burdensome rite and ceremony

shall lose their sanctity, and the tradition shall no longer maintain its superstitious power. Jacob shall lay aside his ancient creed, become the votary of a purer faith, and attune his heart to holier and higher lays. One greater than the feast and sacrifice, more precious than the blood of bulls, or the ashes of a heifer, shall be followed, honoured, and adored. The Messiah will be the key-note of Israel's song, and will cause Zion to "put on her beautiful garments." Hath not the Lord spoken it? "I will set up one shepherd over Israel, and he shall feed them, even my servant David," "he shall be their prince for ever." Yea, "Israel will seek the Lord, and David their king." The Lord Jesus Christ, the Messianic David, foretold by the prophets, and mentioned here, shall, "in the latter days," become both shepherd, prince, and king of Israel. Then shall the Lord make the glory of Zion to come forth as the morning, and her splendour as the noon day. *She will fear no more, neither will she be ashamed nor confounded. She will forget the shame of her youth, and remember her widowhood no more.*

Dear to the heart of Israel must such promises and prospects be. A land still lies before them, a land embalmed in their memory with many affecting and tender associations. In that very land over which a cloud of death has long gathered, yet to them so full of hope and promise, there is no hill, nor valley, nor lake, nor river, nor stream, nor cave, which speaks not to their heart and tells them some eventful tale. The lapse of time has neither effaced their memory, nor lessened their sacred impression, but, on the contrary, has deepened their interest and exalted their importance. To the Jew the very dust of Jerusalem is dear. There, on the Festival days, met the people as the sand on the sea shore. There were the altar, the temple, and the

gorgeous ceremony. There shone forth the glory of her proudest kings, and thither flowed the riches of tributary lands. There was the spot of earth on which the face of God peculiarly shone, while in the nations far around were darkness and the shadow of death. As a lamp lit up by the hand of God, Jerusalem shed its light on the midnight which gathered on every side. She was the joy of Canaan's land. Blessed to the heart of Israel must the prospect be of once more treading the dust of the Holy City, of visiting the tombs of their prophets and kings, of beholding the mountains, and valleys, and rivers, and lakes of their fatherland, and again calling themselves a free and an independent nation. Such, indeed, are the hopes of Israel. The time approaches when God shall fulfil his promise, and bring back his ancient people to their own land. May the Lord speedily bring it to pass!

Having dwelt at some length on the constancy and care of God to his chosen people, it may not be improper here to notice particularly the language of the inspired writer. Language is the casket in which the gem of divine truth reposes. It is the garment which the Spirit of God uses to fold up the saving truths which have come forth from his own loving heart. These are his jewels, packed up by the Spirit of Christ, and gifted to the sinful children of men.

Dear reader, observe the Psalmist does not simply say the Lord is a Shepherd. This would be saying little of importance. Any ungodly Jew or Gentile might sincerely say the same thing. Such would inspire the heart with no comfort and peace. But the sweet singer of Israel could say something more than the Lord is a Shepherd, something which could delight his heart, and give him courage in the day of danger. He could say something which could soothe him in trouble, repress his fears, fill his heart with

peace, and enable him to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. What, then, was that something? What was it that gave him all this blessedness of heart? Dear reader, hear it and mark it well. He could say, "The Lord is MY Shepherd." This was not the expression of the lip merely. Such would have been of little avail. It had a much deeper source. The Psalmist could say from his heart and life, *The Lord is my Shepherd.*

But how did he acquire this knowledge? How did he know that the Lord was *his* Shepherd? He knew it from the change which had taken place in his heart. It was not a matter of doubt. He was fully assured of it. The same power which bore witness that he thought, judged, and reasoned, also bore witness that a saving change was wrought in his heart. With him it was not a matter of mere opinion. Neither was he misled by the force of imagination, nor any species of enthusiasm. He had the same evidence of his blessed change as he had of his own existence. He had the evidence of his own consciousness, the voice of God speaking from the depths of his human nature.

But was this change a saving one? Did it give him hope beyond the grave? Yes; the Psalmist knew that all his sins were pardoned, and that the Lord was his Shepherd. He felt that by the grace of God he had laid down his arms of rebellion, and embraced the terms of mercy and salvation. He knew that he was loyal to his Almighty King, and, therefore, he was no longer under the condemnation. He saw, through the shadows of Jewish sacrifice, a Saviour that loved him and gave himself for him. To him the symbol spoke in no unmeaning phrase. When he saw the sacrifice bleeding upon the altar, he beheld not only his own sins and their consequences, but he beheld a Saviour who could save

from sin and all its woes. He saw the love of God in Christ typified by the sacrifice, and rejoiced in the mercy of God.

The Psalmist felt nothing in his heart, saw nothing in his life, which deserved the pardoning love of God. Ah, no! To him these were sources of evil and alarm. Before his change his heart was estranged from God, and felt no delight in his service. His desires were worldly, corrupt, unholy. God was not in all his thoughts. His life was a dark and poisonous stream. In himself he felt nothing to merit the favour of God. It was pardoning love which gave him peace and joy, and enabled him to look forward with assured hope to a blessed immortality. Though his years had been spent in penitential tears, and his life in the deepest humility, though his heart had been consecrated to God and his faith had been able to remove mountains, yet even all this would not have sufficed to wipe out one sin. No species of human merit can serve as a compensation for the breach of divine law. God can countenance no such moral merchandise. He can forgive, and blessed be his name. He can, on certain conditions, remit the sin of the offender. In his fatherly love he has been graciously pleased to pardon sin, if rebels will repent, believe, and lay down their arms of rebellion. But the condition, though complied with, is not a compensation for the breach of law. It cannot be. Were there such a compensation there would be no room for the exercise of pardon. If the sinner could give a full compensation for all his offences there would, so far as sin was concerned, be no room left for either mercy, pardon, or love. The sweet singer of Israel well knew this when he said, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who

redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies." He knew, well knew, that the merit of his salvation was wholly of grace.

The Psalmist had certain knowledge that the Lord was *his* Shepherd, not only from the change of his heart, but also from his life. The evidence of facts arising from his experience, bore witness that the Lord was *his* Shepherd. His piety, obedience, and zeal for the promotion of God's glory were leading features of his life. The spring of youth and the winter of age alike found him devoted to the interests of his Lord. "O God," he says, "thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not, until I have showed thy strength unto this generation." It was not a few beams of heavenly light which here and there beautified his years. His life was, with a few exceptive shades, a luminous stream of piety. His devotion to God was not only continuous and persevering, but it was also intense in its character. In the duties of religion he was a stranger to the lukewarm and indifferent. "As the hart," says he, "panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before thee? O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee: my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is, to see thy power and thy glory so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live." Few could read such passages as these without being impressed with the elevated tone of piety which they breathe. They are characteristic of one who followed hard after God, and

who could say both from his heart and life, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

But the Psalmist knew that the Lord was his Shepherd from his protecting care. To this he was no stranger. Often did God cast the hem of His garment over him, and shield him from his enemies. For many years he had no home; no safe dwelling-place. The cave, the wood, the mountain, and the solitary place, were haunts to which he fled for safety. Even in such retreats he was in hourly danger of his life. His royal persecutor, like a bloodhound, tracked his footsteps and thirsted for his blood. By the providence of God, twice did he escape the javelin of Saul. Again and again was he delivered from the snares of the treacherous informer. To effect his ruin, no wickedness which kingly vengeance could devise was left untried. In the hour of distress, when the snares of death surrounded him and no path seemed open for escape, he encouraged himself in the Lord, and found a deliverer who led him by a way which he knew not, and through paths which were unknown. To him every deliverance was a testimony of God's care, and increased his confidence and love in the Good Shepherd. His eventful life spoke in no unmeaning phrase, in no doubtful terms; but was a cloud of witnesses bearing testimony that the Lord was his Shepherd.

My reader, can you say, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd"? Do you know his loving voice? Does it find an affectionate response in your heart and life? Are you drawn after the Good Shepherd as with the bands of a man? Do you delight to do his will? Pause, reflect, examine. Let not self-love mislead you. Beware of the wiles of a proud, deceitful heart. Listen attentively to the still, small voice of conscience. Does it tell you a tale of peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ? Does it testify that you have laid

down your arms of rebellion, and submitted to Jesus as your Lord and King? If so, you have passed from death unto life, for "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." For you there is a blessed hope, even an "inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." For you the valley of the shadow of death will have no fears. It is but the dark entrance which leads up to the gate of heaven. It is no more than the grey dawn of that day which will never close. If it be pleasing to watch the departure of night, to behold the pale light stealing upon the distant sky, how much more pleasing will it be to you, O child of God, to watch the departure of the night of death, and to behold the pale light which ushers in eternal day.

But it may be that you are unable to say, "The Lord is *my* Shepherd." You may be able to say, "The Lord is *a* Shepherd." This is not sufficient. You must go farther. The devils can use such language and tremble. If this be the limit of your faith, you occupy the same platform with the greatest of God's enemies. Think of your guilty position. Would you like to die in it, and appear in the presence of your God and Judge? Are you prepared to hear the awful sentence, the doom of the second death, the doom of the unbeliever—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels"? If not, be warned *now*. *To-morrow* is not yours. That measure of time may bear witness that you are lost for ever. It has been the delusion of thousands, and tens of thousands, who now bewail their folly in the place of woe. Could I waft your spirit to the mansions of the lost, could I carry it across that region of death, and could I gather up the testimony of all Hell, *To-morrow* would be the universal cry, the cause of their doleful wails and their ceaseless tears. I

think that I see *To-morrow*, written in letters of fire, on the foreheads of those who have perished. I think that I hear it in the hollow thunders which murmur there, and see it reflected by the lightning's flash all over the depths of woe. To-morrow forms no part of the language of heaven, is not written in the Lamb's Book, and is regarded by the good and the great of past ages, who now strike their harps in heaven, as a dangerous rock on which millions of souls have suffered shipwreck. Trust not *to-morrow*. Have no confidence in its delusive smiles; for it flatters only to deceive, and deceives but to destroy.

Dear reader, give up your heart now to the Good Shepherd, as your days on earth may suddenly come to a close. How uncertain, how very uncertain is life! Look back in the paths of memory and see how many are fallen! How many eyes, once so bright and full of joy, are closed for ever! How many voices are still! How many hearts have ceased to beat! How many have gone the way of all men! Go to the churchyard, where human distinctions lie under the heel of death; where the beautiful and the deformed, the rich and the poor, the great and the little, hold silent communion with one another, and you will see every variety of age and station. Neither rank, nor wealth, nor power; neither youth, nor beauty, nor genius, can ward off the stroke of death. Cast your eye over the banners of the grim foe, which look down upon the sleepers, and read the short record of their lives. There sleeps an infant boy, whose young spirit took but a glance of this cold world, and passed into heaven. There lies a young man cut down in the bloom of life; and three steps from the flowers that bloom upon his grave, sleeps the young husband whose wedded life scarcely saw the snowdrop of the spring. There rests a young woman, snatched away in the bloom and pride of her

bridal hour. There, too, sleeps the young divine whose piety and zeal were known throughout the churches; and, by his side, his hoary brother of eighty years. There, also, rests the ashes of the youthful artist whose genius began to burn and glow, in all the beauty and grandeur of poesy; and when the hearts of thousands were full of his praise, a cloud gathered over him, and he passed away to another world to sing the song of immortality. For aught you know, death may be ready to lay his cold, skeleton hand upon your heart, and cause the streams of life to become still for ever. For aught that you can tell, this may be the last page which you will read, the last appeal made to your conscience, and the last measure of grace that the Spirit shall bestow.

Dear reader, give up your heart to the Good Shepherd; listen to his voice of love, as your day of judgment is at hand. Solemn must be the hour when your naked spirit will stand before its Almighty Judge. You would feel alarmed to be dragged before an earthly tribunal for the breach of human law. The disclosure of your crimes before a jury of your fellow-men, and the sentence of death, falling with terror on your ears, would make your blood run cold, and cause you to quake with fear. But that is nothing; no, nothing. Think of the Tribunal of God. Think of that searching eye that can read at a glance the history of your heart, of your secret sins, of your untold iniquities. Think of the great white throne on which sits the Ancient of Days, the Alpha and the Omega, even the Almighty, infinitely wise and holy. Think of the unspeakable glory which flashes around his throne, of the innumerable angels that obey his commands, of that great multitude, out of all nations, who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And, unpardoned reader, think of the lightning of his eye, the thunder of his voice, and

that cloud of wrath which gathers upon his brow, saying to the angels, "Take ye the unprofitable servant, and cast him into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." Is that a light matter? Can you think of it without a thrill of horror? Is it not enough—more than enough—to poison all your earthly joys? Can you peril such a precious gem as your soul? "What would it profit a man though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

Dear reader, give up your heart to the Good Shepherd, and make him your peace and joy, as this world is not the place of your rest. Does not experience bear witness that this is true? The path of by-gone days has neither been strewn with roses nor gilded with the sunshine. Life's sky has not been always unclouded and clear. The rose has too often been hedged about with thorns; and seldom have you pressed with your foot the roses of life, without being wounded by the hidden thorn. The purest joys of the world often lose their *sweetness* and become stale, and speak in a language which all understand, and say, "This is not your rest." I appeal to your experience for the truth of what I say. I appeal to you who know what the world is, who have tasted its sweets and its bitters, who have been intoxicated with its joys and cast down with its sorrows, who have rejoiced in the sunshine and wept in the shade. Cast the eye of your memory back on the fairest hours of life, when the music of your heart was high, when you drank at pleasure's sweetest stream, when you felt as brimful of joy as if you had stood on the threshold of the earthly paradise and gazed at the tree of life, and say what is the tone of your feelings from the remembrance of such joys. Do they still rejoice your heart? Has not their magic fled? Has not their spirit departed? Does not their very memory

fill the heart with sorrow, and, perhaps, the eye with tears? Vain must be those joys whose memory awakens only a sigh or a tear. Does not, then, your highest earthly bliss bear witness, and say this world is not the place of your rest?

But look beyond yourself, and ask the people of God where true rest is to be found. Will they point you to the world and its passing scenes? Will they tell you to seek for it in wealth, in honour, or sensual enjoyment? Ah, no! they will point you to the Good Shepherd who loved you and gave himself for you. They will tell you to seek for it in Jesus, to trust in him, to follow his footsteps, and be faithful unto death. Each and all of them, without exception, will declare that in Jesus they have found a rest which the world could not bestow. Surely such a testimony deserves your deepest regard. Think of its weight, extent, and character. It is as broad as the church of the redeemed, and is sealed with the blood of many a martyr. It is, too, sanctified by the talent, and genius, and learning, and piety of eighteen hundred years. All heaven and all hell could unite their voices and say, "This is not your rest." Does not your conscience accuse you, and say, "Give up the world and follow the Good Shepherd? Lose not an hour. Linger not. Come just as you are; Jesus is ready to receive you. All that come unto him he will in nowise cast out.

CHAPTER II.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE GREEN PASTURES AND THE STILL WATERS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters."

THIS is a beautiful allusion to pastoral life. The Psalmist, whose early years were spent among the sheep, was well acquainted with the tender cares of a shepherd's life. Often had he carried the lambs in his bosom, and gently led those that were with young. His heart could sympathise not only with the weak of the flock, but would make him go into the wilderness, and bring home the wanderer. He had perilled even his life for his fleecy care. He had plucked the lamb from the teeth of the lion, and the paw of the bear. Dear to his heart must have been the objects of his care, and strong the mutual tie which bound together the shepherd and the sheep. It was a tie, not of fear, but of confidence and love. The sheep knew the voice of their shepherd, and were ready to follow him and obey his commands. But a stranger they would not follow, for they knew not the sound of his voice. How pleasing to see the course of his flock as it slowly tracked the footsteps of its loved shepherd along the banks of some winding stream "beside the still waters," and quenched its thirst with the cooling draught! How pleasing to mark its obedience to the shepherd, in lying down in "the green pastures"!

Such was an interesting scene which spoke of peace, of confidence, and love. Far from the haunts of pride, ambition, and worldly display, the humble shepherd, whether in the solitude of the mountain, or in the quietude of the valley, diligently watched his flock. Its safety and prosperity were his ambition, his pride, and display. In such circumstances, in the midst of God's handiworks—far from the vices of courts and the follies of the gay world—how easy and natural to the pious mind is the language of the Psalmist when he says, "The Lord is my shepherd; he maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters."

The Good Shepherd has never failed to regard the sheep of his pasture with tenderness and love. This has been the experience of God's people in all ages of the world. It is true they have been afflicted, oppressed, persecuted. The truth of God and the spirit of Christ have been always at variance with the world. This is what might have been expected. The world must hate the truth, for it knows that the truth is opposed to its avarice, falsehood, and sensuality. There must, from the nature of things, be continual war between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the world; but the Good Shepherd overrules its evil purposes, and, by his wisdom, makes the very opposition of his enemies contribute to his glory, and to the welfare of his people. This has been often shown. The sacred page informs us, that, after the death of Christ, there arose at Jerusalem a great persecution, which scattered his followers throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. The prospect of imprisonment, or of a cruel death, filled them with alarm, and made them flee for refuge far from the city and its prejudices. Driven from their homes, from the quietude and comfort of domestic life, and exposed to hunger and thirst and danger, they

"went everywhere preaching the word." "And the hand of the Lord was with them; and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord." Thus was the wrath of man overruled and made to subserve the purposes of God in extending the gospel, and in increasing the number of the saved.

God, in his wisdom and love, has, for the good of his people, always overruled the malicious designs of the persecutor. To this fact all ages of the world can testify. Whether we read the story of the prophet or apostle—whether we turn over the numerous pages of the ancient, or the modern scribe—we cannot fail to perceive the hand of the Good Shepherd overruling the oppression of his people: every sigh and tear and groan of his beloved, caused by the wrath of the enemy, had found an affectionate response in the bosom of their Lord. Was the blood of righteous Abel shed in vain? Was it as the dew-drop on the barren soil? Was it like the seed which fell by the wayside? Did the blood of the martyr bear no fruit? Did the savour of his death pass away unheeded like the fragrance of a flower in the wilderness? Ah, no! To thousands who trod the same path, who suffered in the same cause, and who loved not their lives even unto death, it was a savour of life unto life. To the sinner as well as to the saint, the blood of Abel has spoken through all past time. To each it says, Be warned! beware of envy, hatred, malice, and revenge; beware of shedding thy brother's blood. It will lift up its voice to heaven against thee, bring down the vengeance of God, and make thee cry out, "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" but to him who "patiently endures to the end," it says, "For thee there is reserved in heaven, an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away," even "a crown

of glory which the righteous Judge will give thee at the great day."

The subject of *Divine influences*, by which God overrules evil, blesses his people, and helps them on their way to heaven, is important in itself, and deserves more special consideration. In the beautiful language which heads this chapter, the Psalmist alludes to these influences when he says, "He *maketh* me to lie down in green pastures; he *leadeth* me beside the still waters." It was the agency of these influences which inclined him to enter the field of the Shepherd, to feed on the delicious fare, and to lie down in peace among the green pastures. When faint and weary, and ready to perish in a "dry, parched land," it was the same blessed agency which guided his footsteps, led him beside the "still waters," and enabled him to quench his thirsty soul. To him, in his journey through life, the Divine influence was as the pillar of cloud and fire. In persecution, it pointed out his path, and led him in many a winding way. By its virtue, the javelin was turned aside, and failed to accomplish the purpose of the madman. Behold him, driven from his home, away in the wilderness, and beset by his enemies. For safety, perhaps for prayer, he seeks the solitude of the mountains. Its stillness, its rude grandeur, its surrounding scenery, might soften his sorrows, calm his agitation, and afford him a quiet home to commune with his God. Even there, among the wilds of Maon, his royal foe, eager in the pursuit, follows him and thirsts for his blood. But the design of the wicked was in vain. God interfered. The Scripture informs us, that "Saul went on this side of the mountain, and David and his men on that side of the mountain; and David made haste to get away for fear of Saul; for Saul and his men compassed David and his men round about to take them. But there came a

messenger unto Saul, saying, Haste thee and come, for the Philistines have invaded the land. Wherefore Saul returned from pursuing after David, and went against the Philistines." God in his mercy stirred up, in some mysterious way, the ancient enemy to invade the land, that he might shield his beloved, defeat the purpose of Saul, and teach the world a lesson, that his face "is against them that do evil." For "the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry;" "The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth and delivereth them out of all their troubles."

Remarkable, indeed, have been the effects of God's influence in preserving and comforting his people. These effects are not confined to any age of man, but seem to be coeval with the history of his race. Whether we pore over the page of ancient or of modern name, we cannot fail to perceive the merciful working of an unseen, mysterious power. In the early periods of the world God, for the honour of his name, graciously preserved a "seed that served him in righteousness." Noah, a servant of God, and eminent for his piety and zeal, lived in an age full of vice, and daringly wicked. The word of inspiration informs us "that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;" that "the earth was corrupt before God;" "and was filled with violence;" "for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth." "And the Lord said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth;" "his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." "But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord;" for he "was a just man, and perfect in his generations, and walked with God." In the hour of judgment he was not forgotten. No; God remembered his own. The patriarch was safely lodged, and was secure under the wing of the Almighty. The waters

might rise above the earth, and cover the tops of the hills; the dove or the raven might go forth, and find no rest for the sole of its foot; a world that lately lived, rejoiced, blasphemed, might sleep beneath the avenging wave, but he could have said, "God is our refuge and our strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Therefore will we not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof." "The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

As the sun was sinking in the West, and shedding its milder glories over the cities of the plain, there came to Sodom two angels with a message from God. It was that hour of eventide when the heart feels a mysterious power which represses its evil outgoings, and fills it with a blessed calm. Far over the valley were seen the numerous flocks and herds of Sodom, and Gomorrah, and Admah, and Zeboim, as they fed on the green pastures which sprung up in rich and wild luxuriance. The husbandman, too, was busy in the vineyard, where he planted, and pruned, and propped, and cultivated his favourite tree. The Jordan flowed silently in its fulness and strength as it had done for centuries, and seemed in the distance like a zigzag path of silver. The Arnon, also, poured its waters into the plain, and the brook Kidron gently stole through its pebblestones with a low, hollow moan. As yet there was seen no dark cloud, looming in the distance, and foreboding the coming tempest of fire. The ravages of Chederlaomer had been repaired, and the smile of prosperity once more gladdened the valley. The people ate, drank, swore, and followed the grossest sensuality. In all the plain there was but one man who feared God. Vexed with the iniquity of Sodom, and

anxious for its reformation, he had left his home, and gone forth to the gate of the city. To this place the idler, the merchant, and the magistrate were accustomed to go, where they bought, and sold, and quarrelled, and sought for victims to gratify their unnatural lusts. There Lot entreated, and admonished, and rebuked the licentious citizens. While thus engaged, he beheld two men, noble and beautiful in appearance, enter the gate. On them the Sodomite cast his lascivious eyes, thought how he might accomplish his design, and gratify the wickedness of his heart. "But Lot, seeing them, rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face towards the ground; and he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat." Well might they have a feast. Well might they eat the unleavened bread. It was a passover to the Lord, and bespoke their speedy departure from the city of destruction. It was not only the first-born who were to die; but everything that lived within the circle of the plain was doomed to perish. The last drop had filled the cup of iniquity, and made it overflow. That night beheld a scene which makes even the hardened sinner blush. The messengers of the Almighty, the angels that worship before his throne, seemed unsafe from the violence of the depraved citizens. That hour which calls the weary to repose saw the shadows of that judgment which was soon to wipe out this blot on humanity. The Lord struck the guilty Sodomites with blindness. A night—a long, dreary night, one that knows no morning—now closed over the high-viced sinner.

To him were alike for ever the shadow and the sunshine. A thick veil fell over all that was pleasing, precious, and dear to his heart. But as soon as the night had measured out its watches, and the first streaks of the dawn had betokened the dawn of day, Lot and his heavenly escort were seen hastening from the city and the plain. The eventful hour was at hand. Yet the early sunbeam came forth, and shed its golden light over the valley as it had done in other years. The dews seemed to sparkle with more than their usual brightness; and the wild flower appeared more beautiful than it had ever been. The bird, too, seemed to welcome the morning with a sweeter song. It was the last hour. The pulse of all life was soon to be still. The tempest came, and, for a moment, hung over the scene of judgment. The thunders uttered their voice. The storm descended. The whole valley smoked, and burned, and blazed, and glowed like a furnace. Within that circle of fire all life, escape, repentance, pardon, and hope became an impossibility. And now the ashes of those who ate, and drank, and rejoiced in iniquity, rest in peace beneath the sepulchral waters of the Dead Sea.

But the pious Lot was saved. In the day of calamity God remembered his own, and sent deliverance by the hand of his angels. In his mercy he plucked him as a brand from the burning. "He brought him up out of an horrible pit," "and set his feet upon a rock." While thousands perished, the good Lot was safe "under the shadow of the Almighty." "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace. But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord: he is their strength in time of trouble. And the Lord shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver

them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him."

We might speak of the captive princes of Judah, of their confidence in God, their steadfast piety, their peril and persecution, and their wonderful deliverance by Divine power. These themes, though well known, are not the less instructive and comforting to the people of God. They show the deep interest, the watchful care, the constant love of the Great Shepherd of the sheep. When fire, the most alarming element, loses for a time its destructive power, and becomes as gentle as the summer's breeze; when the lion, the fiercest of beasts, appears for a season as harmless as the dove; when the proudest, haughtiest, and most outrageous of kings is calmed, convicted, and made to acknowledge the true God, ought not the believer to have increased faith, strength, comfort, and hope? God is unchanged. "He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." The lapse of years neither lessens his power nor changes his character. His heart is now as full of goodness, his arm as ready to save, his ear as open to the cry of the oppressed, the contrite, and the desolate, as they were in the ancient days. Even now in our own days, God in his providence is exercising his mysterious influences, and overruling the evil purposes of men for the good of his chosen ones, and for the advancement of his own glory.

A gentleman (says the *London Methodist Magazine*), who was travelling in Cornwall, observed a strange dog following him on the road, which, notwithstanding every effort that he used to drive him back, claimed acquaintance with him. Being benighted in a lonely place, he called at the first inn he met with, and desired to be accommodated with a room. After supper, the gentleman retired to rest; but no sooner had he opened the door than the fore-named dog rushed in.

After some fruitless efforts to drive the dog away, the gentleman permitted him to stay in the room, thinking he could do no harm. When the gentleman began to prepare for bed, the dog ran to a closet-door, and then ran back to him, looking very wistfully at him. This the dog did several times, which so far excited the curiosity of the gentleman that he opened the closet-door, and, to his great terror, saw a person in it with his throat cut. Struck with horror, he began to think of his own state. To attempt to run away, he supposed would be unsafe. He therefore began to barricade the door with the furniture of the room, and laid himself on the bed with his clothes on. About midnight, two men came to the door and requested admittance, stating that the gentleman that slept there the preceding night had forgotten something and had returned for it. He replied that the room was his, and that no one should enter it until the morning. They went away, but soon returned with two or three others, and demanded entrance; but the gentleman, with an austere voice, threatened if they did not desist, he would defend himself. Awed apparently by this bold reply, they left him and disturbed him no more.

In the morning, he inquired for a barber. One was immediately sent for, when the gentleman took the opportunity of inquiring into the character of his host. The barber replied that he was a neighbour, and did not wish to say anything to his disadvantage. The gentleman still urged his inquiry, assuring him that he had nothing to fear. The barber then said—

"Sir, if I must tell the truth, they bear a very bad character; for it has been reported that persons have called here who have never been heard of afterwards."

"Can you," said the gentleman, "keep a secret?"

On his answering in the affirmative, the gentleman opened

the closet-door, and showed him the person with his throat cut. He then directed the barber to procure a constable, and proper assistance with all speed, which was done immediately; and the host and hostess were both taken into custody, to take their trial at the next assize. They stood their trial, and were both found guilty of the murder and condemned and executed. The dog was never seen afterwards by the gentleman.

Thus by means of a dog was the deed of darkness disclosed, the criminals punished, the innocent saved, and God glorified.

When Gilpin, a zealous minister of the Reformation, was on his way to London to be tried before the Popish party, he broke his leg by a fall, which put a stop for a time to his journey. The person in whose custody he was, took occasion from this circumstance to retort upon him an observation which he used frequently to make, "That nothing happens to the people of God but what is intended for their good;" asking him whether he thought his broken leg was so, he answered, meekly, "I make no doubt it is." And so it proved; for before he was thus able to travel, Queen Mary died. Being thus providentially preserved from probable death, he returned to Houghton through crowds of people, who expressed the utmost joy, and blessed God for his deliverance.

God saw it fit to lay his servant aside, and to make the sick-chamber a hiding-place till the storm of persecution had passed. In love he permitted this accidental fall, which at first seemed a sad affliction, but which afterwards was seen to be a great blessing. God truly makes all things work together for good to those who love him.

A poor woman, residing in a village in Bedfordshire (England), had occasion to go to another village, about three

miles distant; and, as she could not return before evening, it was agreed that her husband, who was a labouring man, should meet her as she returned home.

The night being extremely dark, she unfortunately missed her way, and her endeavours to find the path only led her farther from it. Bewildered and alarmed, she wandered she knew not whither. In this distressing situation, she walked about for some time, until completely fatigued and exhausted. At this moment, it was strongly impressed upon her mind to sit down, and wait the return of the morning. This she accordingly did; and, on extending her feet, in order to obtain as much relief as possible, they splashed in some water.

Ignorant of her real situation, and without one ray of light to direct her, her feelings may be more easily conceived than described. With the utmost anxiety she awaited the dawn of day, which discovered her perilous situation on the bank of a deep river, the Ouse, into which another step would have plunged her.

Being a pious woman, she first acknowledged with unfeigned gratitude the hand of her Gracious Preserver, and then made the best of her way home. That God whom she served did not desert her in the hour of danger. By a mysterious influence she was constrained to sit down, when the next step would have been inevitable death. Her husband was far from her, and was unable to help her in the trying hour; but there was One who looked through the shadows of the night, saw her danger, and snatched her from the jaws of death. The Lord is very merciful to all those who place their confidence in him.

We might go on without end with similar cases. Let another example suffice.

A clergyman of the State of New York (says *The Religious Museum*), through misapprehension of a leading member,

was precipitately deprived of his pulpit, which involved a large family in necessity. At supper, the good man had the pain of beholding the last morsel of bread placed upon the table, without the least means or prospect of a supply for his children's breakfast. The wife and children, full of grief, retired to bed. The minister chose to sit up, and employ his dark hours in prayer, and reading the promises of God. Some secret hope of supply pervaded his breast; but when, whence, or by whom, he knew not. He retired to rest, and in the morning appeared with his family, and performed the duty of prayer. Being the depth of winter, and little fire being upon the hearth, he desired his wife to hang on the kettle, and spread the cloth upon the table. The water boiled, the children cried for bread, and the afflicted father, standing before the fire, felt those emotions of heart, unknown to those whose tables are replenished with affluence.

While in this painful state, some one knocked at the door, entered, and delivered a letter into the minister's hand. When the gentleman was gone, the letter was opened, and, to the minister's surprise, it contained a few bank bills, with a desire of acceptance.

So manifest an interposition of Divine goodness could not but be received with gratitude and joy, and should be a lesson to others to trust in that Saviour who has said—"Verily, thou shalt be fed" (Psa. xxxvii. 3); "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee" (Heb. xiii. 5).

This remarkable occurrence being communicated to the editor, who, having an intimacy with the gentleman that brought the seasonable relief, determined the next time that he made him a visit to introduce the subject, and, if possible, to know the reasons which caused the generous action. The story being told, the gentleman discovered a modest blush, which evinced the tenderness of his heart.

On interrogation, he said that he had frequently heard that gentleman; on a certain morning he was disposed for a walk; thought that, in the severity of the winter season, a trifle might be of service, as fuel was high; felt a kind of necessity to enclose the money in a letter; went to the house, found the family circumstanced as above described, delivered the paper and retired; but knew not the extreme necessity of the minister and his family until that moment.

From this short narrative, it is plain that God by his influences upon the mind brings about events which relieve his people in poverty, remove their sorrows and fears, and fill their hearts with gratitude and praise. Is not our help from God? Is not our strength and safety in his favour? "Trust in the Lord and do good. . . . . Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." (Psa. xxxvii. 3, 4.)

Having illustrated the Divine influences by a variety of examples occurring in the providence of God, let us now consider their effect in grace: "He maketh me to lie down *in green pastures;* he leadeth me *beside the still waters.*"

The green pastures and the still waters are used figuratively, and mean the blessed truths of the Bible.

Those parts of Canaan which were uninhabited, were chiefly used as pastures, and known as deserts or wildernesses. They were either hilly ranges, or sandy plains which, in moist places, were covered with small patches of grass. These tracts belong to no one, but are commons, used to feed cattle. During the summer the wandering tribes migrate towards the north, which is the hill country, and, in the winter, they return to the south into the plains. Thus, in the winter, they avoid the cold, and, in the summer, the heat of the climate, finding abundance of pasturage for their flocks. In the times of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

Palestine was regarded as a common. Originally the world itself must have been a great common. The truth of God's Word is an immense common. It belongs to all, but to none in particular. All may feed upon its heavenly pasture, and rejoice. The peasant and the prince, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, are equally welcome to enter this sacred common, and eat of its green pastures. It is to all without exception. No man has a right to say I am lord of this sacred domain; I will let out its blessings to whom I will. No Levite, however exalted his rank may be, has any warrant to assume such a power. The Lord of the pasturage has declared that it is "without money and without price." You may be poor, may not have an acre, even a foot, of land; you may not be the owner of a lordly dome, or even of the meanest cottage; you may be friendless, homeless, and a wanderer, but, with all your earthly poverty, you have a possession which makes you richer than he who rules an empire. With the grace of God, helping you to feed and rejoice in this common, you are infinitely richer and happier than a godless king. Within the circle of this blessed common, dear reader, you have all that can truly enrich your soul. You can wander over its broad fields, and cull whatever is pleasing, purifying, comforting, elevating. The Lord of the common, in his infinite wisdom and love, has adapted it to the various conditions of life. Have you met with worldly loss? Has your wealth, or competence, or means of support been taken away? Have you been smitten by the hand of disease? Have you been bereaved of dear children, whose sweet faces you see no more? There is a little patch of the common to which you can go, and find balm to your heart. Repair to Uz, and taste its pastures. Feed, for a season, with Job. His losses were greater than yours. Were not his sorrows of

a deeper dye? In all his affliction, he trusted in God, and was resigned to his will. In due time the Lord drew him out of the deep waters, and abundantly blessed him. His wealth was increased, his virtue exalted, and his piety enflamed.

Green pastures are satisfying to the appetite of the flock, and preferred to any other kind of food. It is that provision which God in his wisdom specially bestows, and must, for that reason, be most suitable to its wants. By its use more health, strength, and comfort must result to the flock than from any other kind of nourishment.

So it is with the sacred pastures of God's Word. They only can satisfy the soul. The world, with its stores of wealth, its treasures of science, and its manifold sources of enjoyment, have failed to give satisfaction to the heart of man. This is the history of his race. It is equally true of the prince and the peasant, of the learned and the unlearned, of the miser and the votary of pleasure. All are dissatisfied, and feel that the world is not what they expected it to be. Solomon, said to be the wisest of men, had great advantages to guide him to the knowledge of this subject. Possessed of great intelligence, riches, power, and opportunity, perhaps beyond most of the race, he must be allowed to be an authority on this matter. After the experience of all earthly pleasure, he declares it to be vanity and vexation of spirit.

When Severus, Emperor of Rome, found his end approaching, he cried out, "I have been everything, and everything is nothing." Then ordering to be brought to him the urn in which his ashes were to be enclosed, on his body being burned, according to the custom of the Romans, he said, "Little urn, thou shalt contain one for whom the world was too little."

Let us give one other witness to show that the world cannot satisfy the soul.

The Earl of Chesterfield was a nobleman, for whom nature had done much, and birth and education more. He was in his day allowed by all to be the most elegant and accomplished man in Europe, and he was no less in the fashionable world. No man ever possessed greater advantages for pleasures, and no man ever drank more deeply of the sweet but poisonous draught. Let us hear him at a time when disease and age hung heavily upon him, and rendered him incapable of further enjoyment. "I have seen," said he, "the silly rounds of business and of pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and, consequently, know their futility, and regret not their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is, in truth, very low. Those who have not experienced them always overrate them. They see the gay outside only, and are dazzled by the glare. But I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminated the whole decoration, to the astonishment of the ignorant audience. When I reflect on what I have seen, what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry, and bustle, and pleasure of the world, had any reality. I look upon all that is past as one of those romantic dreams which opium commonly occasions; and I do by no means desire to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dream. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation which most people boast of? No; for I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no! I think of nothing but killing Time the best way I can, now that he has become mine enemy. It is my resolution to *sleep* in the carriage during the remainder of my journey."

This world alone cannot satisfy the desires of man. He is a being designed for two different states of existence, and is endowed with different powers to fit him for their enjoyment. He has not only an earthly, but likewise a religious nature. He loves, admires, and strives to obtain the things not only of this life, but also of the life to come. Such is the history of man. If so, it is not strange that he, when devoting his attention solely to the world, should become dissatisfied. In such a case he misapplies certain powers of his nature, and, instead of exercising them in the service of God, devotes them to the world. As well might he misapply any other power, either of body or of mind, and expect that the result would be satisfaction. If, instead of useful industry and the good of his fellowman, he spends his waking hours in idleness, in sensual indulgence, in parties of pleasure, in seeking wealth, honour, or fame, he misapplies his powers, and the consequence will be a very unsatisfactory state of mind. He will be discontented and unhappy, for he thwarts not only his own nature, but likewise the commands of God.

Very different is it with the man who walks in the green pastures of God's Word. His soul is satisfied. It has found a class of objects suited to its wants, and commensurate with its greatest desires. In its weakness, it finds a God of strength. In its fears, it beholds a refuge. In sin, there is a God to pardon. In sorrow and sickness, there is a Saviour to soothe and comfort. To the lost soul there is a precious redemption, and, in the world to come, there is eternal life. Are you desirous of a great inheritance? There is one in heaven, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Are you longing for a home, separated from the cares and troubles of life? There is one beside Jesus, where you shall hunger no more, neither thirst any

more; neither shall the sun light on you, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed you, and lead you unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes.

Ask the children of God if they are satisfied with the green pastures of his love. Will they say that these are "vanity and vexation of spirit"? Will they shed tears that their boundaries are too small? Will they say that they impart no joy, that they fall short of their expectations? Very different will be their reply. All of them, without exception, will tell you that they were neither satisfied nor happy, until the Spirit of Jesus led them into the blessed pastures, and enabled them to enjoy their heavenly sweetness.

Hear the testimony of one, poor in the things of this world.

The Rev. H. Venn, once told his children that he would take them to see one of the most interesting sights in the world. He would not tell them what it was; but, in the evening, he led them to a miserable hovel, whose ruinous walls and broken windows showed an extreme degree of poverty and want. "Now," said he, "my dear children, can any one that lives in such a wretched habitation as this be happy? Yet this is not all. A poor young man who is lying there upon a miserable straw-bed, and is dying of disease, at the age of nineteen, is consumed with fever, and afflicted with nine painful ulcers." "How wretched!" they all exclaimed. He then led them into the cottage, and, addressing the poor, young, dying man, said, "Graham Midwood, I have brought my children here to show them that it is possible to be happy in a state of disease, and poverty, and want; now, tell them if it is not so." The dying youth, with a sweet smile, replied: "Oh! yes, sir; I would not change my state with that of the richest person

on earth, who has not those views which I have. Blessed be God! I have a good hope, through Christ, of being admitted into those regions where Lazarus now dwells. I have long forgotten all his sorrows and miseries. Sir, this is nothing to bear, whilst the presence of God cheers my soul, and can have access to him by constant prayer, through faith in Jesus. Indeed, sir, I am truly happy, and I trust to be happy through eternity. Every hour I thank God who has brought me from darkness into his marvellous light, and has given me to enjoy the unsearchable riches of his grace."

Reader, pause, reflect, forget not where true satisfaction ever dwells.

The pastures of Canaan were a *gift* to the Jews. The Lord gave the land to Abraham and his seed for ever: "And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." "In that same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the rivers of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

So are the pastures of God's Word a gift to the world. They are not lent, but they are given by God. The gospel of his love is not offered, but it is gifted to the very chief of sinners. Reader, are you a sinner? The gift is yours as if you were the only man to whom it was sent. God has laid it on your open palm, and he entreats you by his Spirit to gather your fingers over it, and to call it your own. Sinner, whatever your character may be, the gift is yours, whether you receive or reject it. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son

shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." God loves you, deeply loves you, loves you beyond all expression. His gift is an unspeakable gift to you, and is at once the fruit and testimony of his love. Greatly prize it. Were the Queen to give you her signet-ring, all glittering with jewels, would you not highly esteem it? Would you not regard it as an heirloom? Would it not bespeak her peculiar love and respect? Certainly. Infinitely more valuable is the gift of God. Accident, knavery, or death may rob you of the earthly, but no power can deprive you of the heavenly gift. Time may corrode the jewel, but time cannot corrode Christ. The fairest gem cannot smooth the path of your last hour; the gift of God in Christ can strew it with roses, and scent it with perfumes. Will gold, or jewels, or honour, or fame plead for you at the gate of heaven? No; nothing but the gift of Jesus can be your plea. Reader, have you this gift? Have you made it yours? Be not in haste. What do your heart, your conscience, your life say? Do they rise up in judgment against you? Does their testimony alarm you? If so, God have mercy on your soul! To die without the pale of the heavenly pastures is death—death eternal. Unspeakably better never to have been born.

Green pastures are beautiful and pleasing to the eye. It is a pleasure to cast the eye over the blue sea, bearing the image of the azure sky, and to mark the ripple of the waves as they hasten to break their bands on the pebbly shore. It is beautiful to mark in the distance the messengers of the deep, with their snow-white sails, stealing over the bosom of the waters, and carrying their riches to some far remote land. But it is no less pleasing and beautiful to behold the

green pastures, spread far and wide, diversified with hill and dale, until the distant sky seems to rest on the hoary mountain. The thick carpet of grass, interwoven with odorous herbs and flowers, is delightful to the eye, and gratifying to the sense of smell. The author of our being has so formed us that we receive not only a sensible, but likewise an intellectual and a moral pleasure from the contemplation of such a scene. The thoughts ascend to God, the heart becomes calm and peaceful, and the soul is filled with gratitude and praise.

So are the pastures of God's love pleasing and beautiful to the eye of faith. This is the experience of all believers. It is no day-dream, no delusion, no figment of the fancy, but it is a great fact which has stood the test of centuries, borne the fires of persecution, and come forth from the crucible like the gold of the refiner. To the humblest follower of the Lamb the heavenly pastures are now as green, as fair, as beautiful, as when they first came from the hand of God. They feel not the blighting influences of time and change, nor the destructive hand of man. The green fields of God, like the stars of heaven, which look down peacefully on the earth, and shed their pure light on the bosom of the storm, feel neither the violence of the elements, nor the ravages of war, nor the corroding influence of years. The heart of Jesus is now as tender, his eye as compassionate, his death as meritorious, and his power as effectual to save, as when he came forth from the silence of the sepulchre, and ascended on high. All his promises are as comforting, encouraging, sustaining, exalting, and purifying, yea, as full of grace and beauty as when they first fell on the ear of the multitude, or were breathed into the souls of his chosen few. Jesus, though seated on his throne, and crowned with glory, is now as gentle, meek, and merciful, as humble, patient,

and ready to save, as when he wept over Jerusalem, and said: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wing but thou wouldst not!" Neither did he cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. The bruised reed was the object of his tender care, and the smoking flax was cherished with the breath of his love.

Such beauty of character has never appeared in the world. Whether you scan the pages of ancient or of modern history you will not find his compeer. The sages of Greece and Rome were an honour to our common nature, but the sages of Greece and Rome shrink into insignificance before Christ. Hear the testimony of the French atheist, Leguinia: "He called himself the Son of God, and who among mortals dare say he was not? He always displayed virtue; he always spoke according to the dictates of reason; he always preached up wisdom. He sincerely loved all men, and wished to do good even to his persecutors. He developed all the principles of moral equity, and of the purest patriotism. He met danger undismayed, described the hard-heartedness of the rich, and attacked the pride of kings. He dared resist, even in the face of tyrants. He despised glory and fortune, and was known for his sobriety. He solaced the indigent, taught the unfortunate how to suffer, sustained weakness, and fortified decay. He consoled the misfortunate, and knew how to shed tears with those who wept. He taught men to subjugate their passions, to think, to reflect, to love one another, and to live happily together. He was hated by the powerful, whom he offended by his teaching; and persecuted by the wicked, whom he unmasked. He died under the indignation of the blind and deceived multitude, for whose good he had always lived."

Hear the confession of Rousseau, another distinguished French infidel: "I will confess to you," says Rousseau, in his "Treatise on Education," "that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history it contains, should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manner! What an affecting gracefulness in his delivery! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind, what subtlety, what truth in his replies! How great the command of his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live, and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? When Plato described his imaginary good man, loaded with all the shame of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ. The resemblance was so striking that all the fathers perceived it.

"What prepossession, what blindness must it be, to compare the son of Sombronisous to the son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion there is between them! Socrates, dying without ignominy, easily supported his character to the last; and if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was anything more than a vain sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of morals. Others, however, had before put them in practice; he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their examples to

precepts. Aristides had been just before Socrates defined justice. Leonidas had given up his life for his country before Socrates declared patriotism to be a duty. The Spartans were a sober people before Socrates recommended sobriety. Before he had even defined virtue, Greece abounded in virtuous men. But where could Jesus learn that pure and sublime morality, of which he only has given us both precept and example? The greatest wisdom was made known amongst the most bigoted fanaticism; and the simplicity of the most heroic virtue did honour to the vilest people on earth.

"The death of Socrates, peaceably philosophising with his friends, appears the most agreeable that any one could desire. The death of Jesus, expiring in the midst of agonising pains—abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation—is the most horrible that could be feared. Socrates, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it; Jesus, in the midst of excruciating torments, prayed for his merciless tormentors.

"Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of asage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God. Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction? Indeed, my friend, it bears not the mark of fiction; on the contrary, the history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ. Such a supposition, in fact, only shifts the difficulty without obviating it. It is more inconceivable that a number of persons should again agree to write such a history than that one only should furnish the subject of it. The Jewish authors were incapable of the diction and of the morality contained in the Gospel, the marks of whose truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero."

If the infidel can draw such a beautiful picture of Jesus, surely the Christian can add to its gracefulness. If, from the mere powers of intellect and taste, the former can, with so much eloquence, describe his character, how much more exquisitely may the latter, who has experienced his saving power, and felt in his soul the beauty and excellence of that character! If such a fair flower can shed so much loveliness on the cold, barren soil of infidelity, how much more beautifully ought it to bloom when planted in the Eden of faith! Reader, has this heavenly flower a place in your heart? Does it shed its sweet influence over your life?

The chief use of pastures is to feed the flock. These are suited to its wants, and so formed by the wisdom of God as to sustain it in life. The mystery of life which lies beyond the pale of our knowledge, is by a wonderful process supported by the simple herb of the field. The All-wise Creator has endowed the flock with certain powers, by the exercise of which the green grass is changed into animal life. How this is accomplished is a problem which, in all probability, God only understands, and is one of the many mysteries which surrounds us. Thus the flock insensibly grows, increases in strength, and at last attains its full size.

So is it with the heavenly pastures; their chief use is to feed the soul. God has given them for this purpose, and adapted them to meet the spiritual wants of man. No one, be he saint, or be he sinner, can, in the sincerity of his heart, enter these sacred grounds, and partake of their riches, without feeling his soul imbued with their sweet influences. There is a divinity in God's Word, which, when perceived by the intelligence, and allowed to distil into the heart, produces a change in our spiritual nature, and gradually improves the life. As the dews of the morning which

fall softly and silently on the tender flower restore its fading beauty, so the truths of Jesus that fall gently into the heart of the Christian restore and strengthen all the fading graces of his soul. As the sun which shed its beams over the world produces all these beautiful hues that appear in nature, so the light of the gospel, which shines into the hearts of God's people, produces all those beautiful graces which adorn the Christian world. God, in his wisdom, has, for his glory and the good of man, established an order of causes and effects in the spiritual as determinate as that in the material world. We know from experience that the intellect and the will are no less under the government of laws, than the stars which run their races through heaven. Were the human heart under the influence of no law, and made incapable of cause and effect, the moral government of man would be impossible, and the spirituality of the Bible would be but "as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." But it is not so. We feel that it is not so. Our experience tells us that evil communications corrupt the heart and debase the character; and that, on the contrary, good communications purify the heart and elevate the character. This is the law of our moral nature. The truth of God's Word when instilled into the heart must, therefore, nourish and strengthen the Christian graces, and, by degrees, bring them more in harmony to the Divine will.

That the Christian should require the green pastures to sustain the Divine life in his soul, is in accordance with the economies of nature. All life, whatever be its character, requires some kind of nourishment for its support. Every species of animal, whether it creeps on the land, or swims in the deep, or flies in the air—every species of plant, the smallest as well as the greatest, whether it blooms under the waters, or grows unheeded by the wayside, or spreads its

expansive boughs on the heights of Lebanon—requires a measure of nutriment to sustain its life. How soon does the leaf wither when Heaven withholds the shower! How soon does its beauty fade and pass away! How soon, too, is the animal, though full of life, though in the pride of its youth and beauty of its years, changed into an offensive carcase, when it no longer receives its wonted cheer! Were the necessaries of life withheld, death, universal death, would cast his dark pall over the world. No leaf, not a blade of grass, not the tiniest weed would meet the eye; not an animal—whether on the land, or in the sea, or in the air—would breathe the breath of life. The seasons might return, as they have done through nameless years, but the inspirations of their voices would awaken no life. The earth would be a solitude, a vast charnel-house, where nothing was heard but the hollow murmurs of the winds and the waves. As dreary, as solitary, as full of death, would the Christian world be, were the pastures of God's love to become forbidden ground. Every grace which adorns the heart, and embellishes the life; that faith which strengthens and enables us to overcome the world; and that blessed hope which casts a halo of joy over the last hour, would pass away as a dream of the night. On all the earth, the divine life would no longer find rest for the sole of its foot; and man's heart would become the region of the shadow of death.

But how is it that many persons, professing to feed on the gospel pastures, make no progress in the life divine? They do not grow. Their faith, their hope, their charity—all their graces—either stand still, or seem gradually to decay. Years pass away, and find them making no advances, as if some spiritual draught had fallen on their heart. The Sabbath comes with its sweet silence, and finds them seated in the pew, engaged in the solemnities of the day. At

home, neither are they strangers to the circle duty. They read, they pray, they think of their sins. Still they are barren; and are as proud, selfish, covetous, and capable of *driving a hard bargain* as any of their ungodly neighbours. But should any one step aside from the path of right, they will probably be the first that will launch their anathema at the offender. How comes this? Why such unfruitfulness? Is it God's will? No: he is infinitely good and holy. Is it that they stand without the pale of the Atonement? Then their damnation would be a necessity. "God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked." He earnestly entreats them to "turn from their evil ways." Is it because he withholds the Spirit's influence? If so, progress in the Divine life would be an impossibility. Does God reap where he has not sown? Is he such a hard taskmaster? Is it, then, God's fault, or is it their own fault? Surely, it is not God's fault, "who desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;" and who has said by the mouth of the prophet, "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" It must, then, be their own fault. Who dare charge God as the author of their unfruitfulness? The fault is not in God, it is in themselves. They misuse the pastures. There is no increase. Either they stand still, or slowly decline. They should remember, that it is not what is eaten, but what is digested, that nourishes, strengthens, and causes growth. A man may read the Bible, hear many sermons, and sing abundance of hymns, and yet feel that he is making no religious progress. The truth is not understood. Its beauty is unfelt The conscience sleeps. The sinner wanders through "the region of the shadow of death." The truth is not digested, and therefore gives neither strength

nor increase. It may be that some of the heavenly seed falls into the understanding, but it is not allowed to remain, Some other interest dearer to the heart expels it, or destroys its fruitfulness.

God's truth, if properly understood, and kept before the mind, will in no instance fail to convict, convert, and sanctify. He who formed the soul, formed also the truth to meet the wants of that soul. As the herb of the field is made to meet the wants of the flock, so the inspired Word is made to meet the spiritual wants of man. If so, the pastures of Divine truth are as sure to nourish the soul, as the green fields of the earth are sure to nourish the flock. As the smallest blade of grass, when digested, gives a corresponding measure of bodily increase and strength, so the smallest text of God's Word, when understood, and allowed to settle in the heart, gives a corresponding measure of spiritual increase and strength. All God's children who feed on his *Word*, and feel their graces expanding, can bear witness that this is true. Even the backslider who neglects that Word knows, from painful experience, that this is true. Often does the hardened sinner, awakening in his last hour to a despairing view of his lost condition, give awful testimony that this is true. God also testifies to the same effect, when he says, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." "When wisdom entereth into thy heart, and knowledge is pleasant to thy soul, discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee, and deliver thee from the way of

the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things." "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is pure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life. . . . For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."

Reader, have all confidence in the heavenly pastures. If, in this life, there be aught that will never deceive you, anything in which you can safely trust, it is the nourishing power of God's Word. You have unwavering faith in the strengthening power of human scienee. You know, when it is treasured in the understanding, that it expands the intellect and refines the man. If the human, then, can thus induce your faith, how much more ought the divine! Is the heavenly science less certain in its results than the earthly? No; thousands of saints, now living can testify that "the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." This is no dream, no figment of the fancy. It is a fact which falls under daily observation. Every Sabbath, every religious revival, and every brand that is plucked from the

burning, magnify the power of the truth. The martyr, whether he lay in the dungeon, or passed his days in exile, or perished in the flames, stiil speaks, through the lapse of years, of the mighty power of the word divine. That great multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, now standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, bear witness to the saving power of the word as it is in Jesus. The day, that great day, when the earth, and the sea, and the fire, shall open their treasuries, and give up their dead, shall testify to the blessed power of God's Word. Will not the wail of the lost, as well as the song of the saved, be a memorial, through all ages, of the truth and the power of God's Word?

Reader, whatever your character be, holy or unholy, have all confidence in the *Word.* Live on its green pastures. Be not satisfied with ths Sabbath meals. Such will not sustain you during the six days. Feed daily, hourly if you can. Lay up, in your memory and understanding, the promises of Jesus. Often repeat them in the silence of your soul. They will calm your troubled heart, and inspire you with a peace, a joy, a satisfaction, which nothing earthly can bestow. Add daily to your stock of Christ. Be not satisfied with a few passages, but treasure up in your memory the richest portions of God's Word, Ask God, for Christ's sake, to help you to understand it, that its sweet influences may fall into your heart. Get within you as much of Jesus as you can. Be not satisfied with saying and singing that Jesus died for sinners; you may say and sing all this, and more, and yet never enter the kingdom of heaven. If you would be saved, you must go further. You must be able not only to sing and say that Jesus died for sinners, but you must *know* and *sincerely feel* that he died for you, a convicted, an anxious, and a repentant sinner.

"He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life." "He that hath the Son, hath life." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him." If you have this belief, this confession, this life; if you are born of God, and have God dwelling in you, then you have come within the pale of salvation and been planted in the vineyard of the Lord. But this is not enough. The plant must grow and bring forth fruit. If it become stunted and barren, the hopes of the Planter will be disappointed. Shall he not then say, Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? Jesus declares that "every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away." "Take ye the unprofitable servant, and cast him into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth." The command, to grow and bear fruit, is as possitive as the command to believe the gospel. Hence the Spirit says, "Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect"; "Mortify your members which are upon the earth"; "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." Would you grow, would you bear fruit, would you "be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, "*let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.*" Then you shall grow as the lily, and cast forth your roots as Lebanon. Your branches shall spread out, and your beauty shall be as the olive tree, and your smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under your shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine, the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

Having spent some time among the Green Pastures, and seen something of their blessed character, let us now turn to the Still Waters, and taste their heavenly sweetness.

In God's Word, the gospel of his love is presented to us in a variety of aspects. It is compared to "a grain of mustard seed, the least of all seeds; but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." It is likened to "leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." It is compared to a "pearl of great price," to a "treasure hid in a field," to "a net that was cast into the sea," to "wine and milk," to "water," to "living water," and here to "*still waters*." Many and varied are the similitudes under which the gospel appears, both in the Old Testament and the New. In making known his redeeming love, God had a wise design in presenting the saving truth in such a variety of forms. If the truth appears under the aspect of a grain of mustard seed, it represents the small beginning, and yet the wonderful increase, of the work of grace in the hearts of men. When it is compared to leaven, hid amongst three measures of meal, it manifests its power of assimilating man's nature to its own. When it is likened to a "pearl of great price," its great value and ornamental character are set forth to engage our attention; and when presented to us as a "treasure hid in a field," it denotes the fulness of its precious promises and blessings. When it is represented as "a net cast into the sea," it shows us its power of convicting and converting sinners, and of bringing them within the pale of its influence. If the truth appears under the form of milk, it bespeaks its fitness to nourish the tender babe in Christ; if under the figure of wine, it betokens its power of inspiring the heart with joy; if under the aspect of water, or of living

water, it denotes its healing, cleansing, and strengthening power, and the restless activity of its character. In the psalm before us the truth is called the still waters, and conveys the pleasing idea of peace. The smooth stream, the glassy lake, the tranquil sea, are beautiful and sublime emblems of peace, and, when contemplated, seldom fail to awaken a corresponding state of mind. But such a peace is merely sympathetic, and transitory in its nature. The still waters of God's love in Jesus, when they find their way into the heart, gives a peace which the world does not know, a peace that abides with us in all the trials and changes of life.

The gospel of Jesus, figured as *still waters*, gives peace to the soul. It calms its fears, soothes its sorrows, and inspires its joys. If it does not entirely remove the cares of life, it so modifies them that they are no longer objects of anxiety. The gospel of Christ gives confidence in God. It presents Him as a Being of infinite love and mercy, not willing that any should perish: "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Such expressions of love give confidence in God, and fill the heart with tranquility. Could Solomon, once the wisest, richest, and most glorious of Eastern kings, have used such endearing words to his subjects, what would have been the result? The nation would have held a jubilant day. There would not have been a sad, anxious, and hopeless heart in

the land. Every Jewish home would have been full of peace, and hope, and joy. Judea would have been as the garden of Eden, and her glory like the outgoings of the morning. But is not a greater than Solomon here? Is He not wiser, richer, and more glorious? Can Solomon in all his greatness be compared to the Man of Sorrows? The Son of God comes clothed with wisdom, and truth, and righteousness, and love, and bowels of mercy, and gives to the world, for its acceptance, such a precious gospel, so rich, so full of all blessings, so perfectly suited to its present and prospective joys, that the greatest, proudest, and most glorious of earthly kings could not bestow. Were the world to accept the gift, to feel its power, and its claims, and to embody them in its life, there would be "peace on earth, and good will towards all men." The nations would henceforth "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks"; neither would "they learn war any more." Then might "the wolf dwell with the lamb; and the leopard lie down with the kid." "The calf, and the young lion, and the fatling" might herd "together; and a little child lead them." "The cow and the bear" might "feed"; "their young ones lie down together; and the lion eat straw like the ox." "The sucking child" might "play on the hole of the asp; and the weaned child put his hand on the cockatrice den." But O, unbelieving man! how long shalt thou be unmindful of thy Saviour, of thy highest and holiest interests, of thy purest and most blessed enjoyments! How long shall war, and ambition, and avarice, and oppression, make this beautiful world a valley of tears! How long shall the tender mercies and lovingkindness of indulgent Heaven be trodden under foot as the small dust of the highway! How long shall the god of this world hold in bondage his willing slaves! How long shall the

sleeper indulge his dream of iniquity and sin! When shall the morning break, and the shadows flee away? How long shall corruption, and hypocrisy, and pride, and all manner of ungodliness prevail! When shall the *still waters* of peace cover the earth "as the waters cover the sea"! How long shall the peace speaking blood of Jesus cry aloud and say, O earth, earth, whose hands are red with the blood of the Holy, how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood under her wing, but thou wouldst not!

But blessed be the Saviour, "the *still waters*" of his love can give peace with God to the chief of sinners. Like the waters of the Jordan, they can cleanse the worst of Naamans, and make his flesh become like that of a little child. Applied by the Spirit of God, they can wash away all his transgressions, and make him a new creature. There is no sin, however great, however deep its dye, however aggravated in the sight of God, which these waters, when let into the heart, cannot remove. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." "Being justified by faith, the sinner has "peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ." "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus; for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made" them "free from the law of sin and death."

But in order to enjoy the peace of the *Still Waters*, the sinner must feel the guilt of his sin. It is not enough that he acknowledge his sin; he must feel its guilt. Most men, even the infidel, will feel little difficulty in confessing sin, but they have but a feeble impression of its moral enormity. Could they perceive the misery which it has produced, whether on earth or in hell; could they look back on the

stream of time, and contemplate the wars, oppressions, cruelties, and crimes that it has caused; could they gaze into the hearts of their fellowmen, and behold the pain, distress, and desolation which have dwelt there; and, O God! could they survey the abyss of hell, and see its agonising woes, its living death, its hopeless despair, it would be impossible for them to regard sin otherwise than an infinite enormity. Could they feel that every fear which has disturbed their peace, every pang that has wrung their heart, every dark shadow which has gathered over their life, has been occasioned by sin committed, either by themselves or others, they would no longer be indifferent to an evil that was destroying their joys, as well as those of their fellowmen. Would they reflect for a moment, that sin is that dreadful thing which offends God, grieves his Spirit, and opposes his righteous rule; that it is that merciless agent which caused the agonies of Gethsemane, shed the blood of the Saviour, and shut out from heaven nameless millions of the human race; and that it is that abominable thing which an infinitely good, wise, and holy God regards with abhorrence, could they look upon it, could they commit it, without feeling a deep sense of their guilt and responsibility? No; it is impossible. Reader, are you a hopeless sinner, an enemy of God? What does your heart say? What does your life say? Listen to their inspirations; hear their silent voices. Do they not bear witness against you? How many and aggravated the sins of which they accuse you! How many deeds of darkness, concealed from the world, come forth like spectres, and alarm your guilty soul! Do you not feel as if the shadows of the second death were gathering over you, as you were drawing nearer to the abodes of the lost and miserable? Do you not feel as if the worm which dies not was gathering in its cruel folds your corrupt and guilty

heart? Blessed be God, if you can thus see and feel your sin. There is hope for you.

But it is not enough for the sinner to feel his guilt, and be made sensible of the pernicious character of sin. More is required. He must turn from all his sins. If he expects to enjoy peace with God, he must walk no more in the path of evil. He must lay down the weapons of rebellion, and cease to be an enemy of God. His thoughts, his heart, his life, must be no longer at variance with the divine government. If a subject continues to rebel, can he be at peace with his lawful sovereign? While he refuses to lay down his arms, he declares himself an enemy, and openly defies his power. It is not otherwise with the sinner. Whatever his confession of sin and guilt may be, if the tenor of his heart and life be unchanged, he, too, declares himself an enemy of God, and as fully defies his divine power. In the eye of God it is not what the lips say, but what the life says. For a sinner to acknowledge his guilt and sin, and to think and act as he has alway done, is the greatest inconsistency, hyprocrisy, and wickedness. He is the very chief of rebels. With all his light, his experience, and confessions—with death, and judgment, and eternity before him, he perseveres in his enmity, and practically says, he shall still contend with the Almighty. O, sinner, if this is thy condition, how near is thy spiritual state to the fallen, the lost, the miserable in hell! Art thou better than they? Like thee, are they not sensible of their guilt and sin? They "believe and tremble." Like thee, are they not armed to the teeth against God? Were the terms of mercy offered to them as they are to thee, O sinner, would there not be a Jubilee Day in hell? Would not the face of hopeless misery brighten with a smile? Would not the voice of blasphemy be changed into the voice of thanksgiving and praise? Would

there be a solitary rebel in all hell? Art thou, then, better than they? Is thine armed attitude not more relentless than theirs? Hast thou not the terms of mercy before thee? Dost thou not even now reject them? In such a state canst thou have peace with God? No; it is impossible. Wouldst thou have peace? Strive not with thy Maker. Let thy heart submit to his will. Lay down thy weapons of rebellion, and cease thy warfare with heaven.

But specially, in order to have peace with God, the "*still waters*" of his love must flow into the sinner's heart. The clear, crystal river of truth which proceeded from the lips—the life, the death, the resurrection of Jesus—must pour its cleansing, peace-inspiring waters into the soul, polluted and disgusted with guilt and sin. The *gospel of peace*—God's message of love to man—must be sincerely believed. It is not enough that the sinner feels his guilt, and is made sensible of the enormity of sin. Neither is it enough that, with full purpose of heart, he endeavours to turn from the evil of his ways. A deep impression of the evil of sin, and an earnest endeavour to reform the life, are not sufficient to atone for the breach of law. Our common nature—given us by God, and embodied in the form of law—demands more. God, likewise, demands more. "He spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all." "It pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief." "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." "He made him to be sin for us who knew no sin."

God, being satisfied with the work of Jesus, is pleased to pardon and accept the sinner through faith or belief in his

Son. This is the *truth* as revealed by the Spirit, and taught throughout the Bible. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus. . . . . Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." The beloved apostle of Jesus testifies to the same effect, when he says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

From these passages, it is plain that the terms of pardon and peace is faith in Jesus. Sinner, do you feel your guilt? Are you resolved to sin no more? Do you believe that Jesus "loved you and gave himself for you"? Are you willing to submit to the will of God in all things? Is this your state of mind? If so, you have fulfilled the terms of God, and you have authority from his Word to believe that all your sins are pardoned, and that you have "peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." If it is thus that you have believed, you cannot fail in having peace, peace of conscience, peace with God, and peace with your fellow-men. The "*still waters*" of the Redeemer's love have found access into your heart, and these must give you a peace which the world can neither give nor take away.

But in order to believe the truth as it is in Jesus, the influences of the Holy Spirit are necessary. This truth is plainly stated in the passage before us. The Psalmist says, "*He maketh me to lie down* in green pastures: *He leadeth me*

beside the still waters." The words: "He maketh me to lie down," "He leadeth me," plainly express an influence exercised by God on the heart of David. It caused him "to lie down in green pastures," and "led" him "beside the still waters." Without this influence, he would have been for ever a stranger to these blessed pastures, a stranger to the peaceful waters of God's love. Man by nature is inclined to evil and averse to good; and without Divine aid is unable so to receive the truth, as to embody it in his life. In his love, in his tender mercy, God, for the sake of his Son, vouchsafes the aids of his Spirit to enable the sinner so to believe the saving truth as to receive pardon, peace, and eternal life. He knows that without these heavenly aids no man would believe. Were these withdrawn, in vain would the preacher preach, and the missionary travel into distant lands. Without them, the spiritual world among men would become dark and void; the shadow of death would hang over it. Those heavenly graces which bud and grow and bloom in the Church, and which shed their holy influence on the "world lying in wickedness," would soon wither and die. The "green pastures" would no longer satisfy the hungry, nor the "still waters" the thirsty soul. But blessed be God, these influences are not confined—they extend to all. The love of the Spirit is as broad as the love of Christ. Can there be inequality in the Godhead? Can the influences of the Spirit fall short of the Redeemer's work? What does the Spirit say? Listen: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." The Spirit of Jesus is knocking at the heart of the "*any man*," of every unbeliever, and beseeching him to open it and receive the truth.

Dear reader, has not the heavenly messenger come to

thee in all his love and pity, and knocked, and besought thee to unbar the door of thy heart? How many years hast thou been deaf to the voice of his entreaty! How often has he knocked by his providence as well as by his grace! Has he not sometimes smitten thy favourite idol, and made it as the "chaff which the wind driveth away"! Has he not scattered thy dream of ambition, and overthrown thy Babel towers? Has he not frequently brought to nought thy vain and foolish hopes? Has he not humbled thee by disease, and wrung thy heart with bereavement? Does not thy beloved child, on whom thou hast gazed so fondly—whose innocent smile and merry voice have touched thy heart like some tender seraph wafted from heaven—now sleep silently on the bosom of death? Has the pale hand of disease snatched from thee a father, a mother, a husband, a wife, or some dear relative? Dost thou hear their loving voices no more? Does not thine heart—once so cheerful and gay, once so full of hope and aspiration—feel that the world is a wilderness, "a dry and thirsty land," in which there seems no water? Has not, then, the Spirit been calling upon thee, and beseeehing thee by the voice of his providence to lie down in the green pastures of his love?

But more, the Spirit has been calling thee not only by his providence, but likewise by his grace. In early life, in childhood years, has not a tender mother, guided thy feeble accents, and directed thy young heart to a throne of grace? How often has thy little voice repeated the short and simple prayer, taught by her lips, her love, her affectionate care! Anxious not only for thine earthly, she has earnestly sought thy heavenly well-being. Has she not told thee that Jesus loved little children, and said, "Suffer them to come to me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven"? Has she not taught thee the sad story of Jesus until thine eyes were filled

with tears, and thy young heart was like to break? Not satisfied with her own instructions, with the earnest breathings of her spirit, she has, in the integrity of her love, sent thee to the Sabbath-school, to learn more specially the things pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. There, perhaps, thou hast learned to read God's Word, to know his wonderful works, and, under some pious guide, to feel the great evil of sin. There, perhaps, thou hast received instructions and felt impressions which still haunt thy memory, and sometimes fill thee with alarm. There, perhaps, thou hast sung the beautiful hymn which spoke to thee of mercy, and faith, and hope, and heaven. Does not the sweet phrase of these heavenly songs still echo in thine ear, and whisper to thee of the blood that washeth from all sin, and the "fulness of joy" in "the better land"? Do not these, like a wandering strain escaped from some angelic choir, fall on thy recollection, and awaken a pious, perhaps painful emotion? Does not the memory of these happy hours spent in the nursery, or the Sabbath-school, sometimes kindle remorse, embitter thy heart, and call forth a sigh? How many sermons and prayers and earnest appeals have fallen on thine ear, and, perhaps, have awakened thy conscience, and filled thee with fear, yet in a few short hours they have been to thee but "as the morning cloud and the early dew"! How often has the saving truth come to thee with its low, sweet voice, and said, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners;" and yet thy hard heart has said, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee"! Has not, then, the Spirit of God been striving with thee through a mother's love, a mother's tears, a mother's prayers? Has not the Spirit striven with thee through the teachings of the Sabbath-school, as well as those of the chapel and

the church? Has not the Spirit, through the silent reading of the Word, been knocking at the door of thy heart, and earnestly beseeching thee to grant him admission? In how many ways has the Spirit encompassed thee, and sought to "*make thee lie down*" in the "green pastures," and to *lead* thee "beside the still waters"!

Sinner, strive no longer with the Spirit, but listen to his entreating voice. Let his influence, whether addressed to thine affections or to thy fears, mould thy heart, affect thy life, and lead thee beside the "*still waters.*" Be not like the unbelieving Jew, who "*always resisted the Holy Spirit as his fathers did,*" and brought down upon himself the judgments of God. Be not like the Old World, that discarded the heavenly influence, and was told that the "Spirit would not always strive with man." Beware and "quench not the Spirit." Let not thy rebellious heart "vex the Holy Spirit." When a serious thought flits across thy soul, when a pious feeling arises in thy heart, when a good resolve would lay hold on thy will, drive them not away. Give them a kind welcome, receive them as heavenly guests, let them have thy best thoughts, thy most affectionate care. They are ambassadors of Christ come to plead with thee, come to convince thee of sin, and to "make thee lie down in the Green Pastures." Why not comply? Wouldst thou "grieve the Holy Spirit"? He comes to thee with a message of love, of unspeakable joy—a message which, when received into the heart, will give peace with God, and a crown in heaven. Were Queen Victoria to come to thy door, and ask admission, wouldst thou refuse? Though at midnight, would she call in vain? Couldst thou disregard the music of her voice? If she invited thee to court, to the regal banquet, to partake of the honours of the throne, the glories of her great empire, would thine ear be deaf to the voice of

her love? But, behold, a greater, an infinitely greater than she, even the Prince of measureless empires, has come to thy door, and begged admission into thy heart. How often has the Spirit invited thee to partake of the *green pastures*, and to walk by the *still waters!* How often has he besought thee to be a son, a priest, a king, and to reign with him for ever and ever! How long will he plead in vain! How long wilt thou harden thy heart, and refuse the gifts of his love! How long wilt thou be misled by the devil, the world, and the flesh! How long wilt thou suffer the enemy to triumph over thee! How long wilt thou tread the path of folly, and sin, and death! Wilt thou be for ever deaf to the voices that cry aloud? The Spirit is now calling thee by his many providences, calling thee by the many forms of his grace. Why wilt thou not hear? Why wilt thou rush down to hell? Pause; consider thy danger; retrace thy footsteps; lose no time. The night, the silent night, that knows no morning, may soon overtake thee. Do not the shadows already approach thy path? Does not the first star appear on the brow of thine eventide, and admonish thee that the day is past, that "the night cometh when no man can work"? Tarry no longer. Arise and flee for thy life. Escape to the "*green pastures*" and the "*still waters.*" "Look not behind thee;" stay not in thine unbelief, "lest thou be consumed." "The Spirit and the Bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

CHAPTER III.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE RESTORING POWER OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"He restoreth my soul."

MAN, as far as we know, is the only fallen being whom God has been pleased to restore. "The angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day." For these there is no mercy, no hope, no restoration. From them the treasures of his grace are withdrawn. To them there remains no acceptable place, either for repentance, or prayer, or tears. A long night that knows no dawn, a night in which no ray of hope shoots across the gloom, and, for a moment, gilds with its sweet light the bosom of darkness, continues its black and terrible reign. Banished from heaven, condemned by God, averse to all good, and full of malice against the Most High, they are doomed to suffer through ceaseless ages to come. Millions of years may pass away; suns and systems may come forth, may run their circles of existence, and become a scene of desolation and death; but to the spirits of darkness, to the fallen, the lost, the hopeless, there is no shadow of change. Happy to them would the prospect be if, at some remote period, though far beyond the power of numbers, they were able to say with the sweet singer, "He restoreth our souls; he leadeth us in the paths of righteousness for his name's

sake." Such a prospect would gladden the brow of misery, and cover with smiles the face of despair. But it cannot be. No; it is impossible. No message of mercy, no expression of love, can affect their hearts, so hardened, so utterly corrupt, as to be wholly insensible to every gift and influence of Heaven. In vain would the tender mercies of God be displayed, and his pardoning love proclaimed, in the dark abodes of misery! In vain would a Saviour bleed, and agonise, and die, and open a path to their Ancient Paradise! The angelic wanderer would not return. But blessed be God, it is not so with man. Though he has gone astray, and become corrupt, deceitful, and vile, yet he is still within the pale of mercy and hope. God is waiting to be gracious, and is full of tender mercy and loving kindness, "not willing that any should perish." He is now entreating the sinner, and saying, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heaven laden, and I will give you rest." Divine grace can restore the chief of sinners, and impart more joy than all the riches of the first Paradise. It breathes into the heart a hope, a peace, a joy "unspeakable and full of glory," and enables the believer to say with assurance, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

But the sinner whom God is pleased to restore, is he that feeds on the *green pastures* and walks beside the *still waters*. Had David been deaf to the voice of Truth, and resisted the influence of the Spirit, he would never have felt the restoring power of God. Had he shunned the *green pastures*, and avoided the *still waters*, he would have remained a weak and helpless man. But he knew where his strength lay; he knew that it was neither in himself, nor in his throne, nor in his mighty men of valour. Feeble, indeed, were these to

give inward strength, to calm the troubles of his heart, and to support him in the hour of trial. He knew that no form of earthly greatness could ease the pain of remorse, soften the hard heart, give peace with God, or awaken the hope of a blessed immortality. Ah, no! It was in the *green pastures*, the pastures of his love, that he found nourishment to revive his fainting soul. Had he satisfied himself with a mere Pisgah view, he would have felt no renewal of his strength. But the Psalmist did not act in this way. He knew better. He entered the heavenly grounds, partook of their blessed fare, and found it sweeter to his taste than "honey and the honeycomb." It was then, and not till then, he could say, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." So is it with every wanderer. Unless he enter the green pastures, and feed on their rich and blessed supplies, he cannot expect a renewal of his strength to feel the power of restoring love. Would the weary, wayworn traveller, fainting for lack of food, find strength if he refused the nourishing meal? Would not his weakness remain? Would not death soon close the scene? Certainly. Can, then, the unsaved or the backsliding, the weary, the heavy laden, the faint, and those ready to perish, feel an increase of strength, if they abstain from "the bread of life"? Assuredly not. As well might we expect the sickly flock to grow and fatten amidst the desert sands, the tree to flourish and cast forth its fruit on the barren rock, or the earth to bring forth its abundance without the sun and the shower. Our heavenly Father is not the author of impossibilities. In his wonderful workings, how mysterious soever they appear, he wisely adapts means to accomplish certain benevolent ends. Of this great fact, all nature bears testimony. The flower which steps forth in the pride of its beauty, and opens its bosom to the day,

did not gather its loveliness from the hand of chance. Were its embroidered robes, more beautiful than Solomon's, produced by the levity of some accident? No; they were wrought in the loom of the sunbeam, guided by the hand of the Spirit. Do the waters of the sea, which cast forth their rushing, snow-white tides, act from their own stormy impulses? No; they pursue the attractive footsteps of the moon. God, in his wisdom, has, for his own glory, and the good of man, ordained an order of things, not only in nature but likewise in grace. Do you wish, dear reader, to be among the restored? Then step into the green pastures of Christ's gospel, and partake of the heavenly banquet. Do you wish a robe more beautiful than Solomon's—yea, more glorious than the lily's? If so, pass through that narrow gate which leads into the banqueting-hall, and there you will find the robe of Christ's righteousness infinitely more beautiful and precious than that of the fairest flower. The gate is open—open to you, open to all. The "Spirit and the Bride say, Come." Why do you stand without—weak, faint, and ready to die? With God's help, enter, partake, and rejoice in the rich pastures of Divine love, and escape the misery of that death which shall never die.

The restoration of the soul is a subject of very great consequence. No one can overrate its importance. It has a length and a breadth which we cannot understand; and the longer we think of it, the greater it becomes. No earthly subject possesses so much interest. When a man is in the pride of his youth, and strength, and fortune, and suddenly feels the sickly hand of disease, perhaps beholds the approaching footstep of death, what sacrifices will he make to ward off the stroke of the enemy, and to regain his former health! For these ends, he will visit distant lands, drink of the healing spring, search for the restoring balm, and, if

necessary, expend his all on the man of science and skill. But what is the body compared to the soul! The former is but the frail casquet; the latter, the everlasting jewel. The one is soon trampled under the heel of death; the other smiles at his weakness and defies his power. If the welfare of the body can so deeply interest us, how much more should the soul! Jesus says, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Riches, and honours, and empires, and thrones, are not to be put in balance with its wellbeing. These are but glittering toys which sparkle for an hour, and pass away as the dream of yesterday. But it is not so with a soul saved from death. Ah, no! Different, very different, is its destiny. Its joys shall never come to a close. It will strike its harp in heaven, and rejoice, when all earthly greatness has languished and died. The moon may lay aside her silver robes; the sun may lose the brilliancy of his youth, and become cold and pale; and the star may forget to light its taper in the evening sky; but the soul shall never lay aside its robe of righteousness, never lose the brilliancy of its heavenly bliss, and never cease to rejoice in the light of the Saviour's smile. Who can estimate the importance of the soul's restoration? Who can measure it, or weigh it in the balances? Can heavenly numbers reckon its greatness? Can the recording angel tell its value? Can the spirit of darkness, with all his knowledge and bitter experiences, form an idea equal to its magnitude and preciousness? There is one, and only one Being that fully knows its infinite worth and consequence, and who has said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him."

The restoration of the soul is not only an important subject, but it is, likewise, a great work. Great, very great, indeed, must be the work which restores the dead to life. It is a display of power far surpassing that of man. The painter may, by his art and skill, produce on the canvas forms which, to the eye, seem full of life. But the reality soon appears. A nearer inspection dispels the illusion, and reveals the truth that life is not there. The sculptor may, by the power of his genius and the aid of the chisel, make the dull block of marble put on the appearance of a living man; but, with all his gifts and attainments, he cannot breathe into it the breath of life. The human mind has been fruitful in discovery and invention, but it has never solved the mystery of life, or of death. God has, for wise ends, drawn over it an impenetrable veil, and, for his own glory, reserved to himself the power of giving life. In the season of spring he walks forth, and breathes upon the world. The plant feels the divine influence, is filled with life, and rejoices in the breath of the Almighty. The insect and the creeping thing, too, sensible of the same power, come forth from their hiding-places, fill the world with life, and bear testimony that "in Him they live, and move, and have their being." By the same mighty power, Lazarus came forth from the sepulchre, laid aside his robes of death, and once more mingled with his fellowmen. Behold a band of mourners, passing the gate of Nain! Their tears are for the dead. A young man, in the flower of life, the only son of his widowed mother, sleeps in the arms of death, and is being carried to his bed of repose. His poor mother, bowed down with grief, and oppressed with a sense of loneliness, feels that, for her, the world has lost its charms, and that the joy of her heart has passed away. The shadows of death have indeed gathered over her, as if they were never

to be succeeded by the sunshine. But it is not so. Her deliverance is nigh. The Lord of Life is there with a balm for all her sorrows. Beholding her tears, and knowing the desolation of her heart, he is touched with a feeling of tender compassion. As he approaches the bier, and sees its lifeless occupant, he says, "Young man, arise." The dead awakes, sits up, and begins to speak. The glow of health is now on his cheek, and the light of intelligence once more sparkles in his eye. Are not these great works —works which made the people glorify God? But the restoration of the soul is no less a recalling of the dead to life. Man in his natural state is, according to the Scriptures, "dead in trespasses and sins." This mode of speech, used by Paul, does not mean that the faculties of the soul have ceased to exist, and that now they are incapable of thought and feeling. Such a meaning would not be true. Man, even in his worst state, is capable of great efforts of thought, sentiment, and imagination. Byron, and Shelley, and Hume, and Voltaire, and Mirabeau, were infidels of the darkest hue, yet they have produced works which display an ability and a genius that the world has seldom seen. The bulk of mankind, also, shows great activity of mind, whether in buying or in selling, in toiling or in seeking pleasure, in inventing or in making discoveries. There is no lack of mental and moral energy among the unconverted. But they are, by reason of sin, spiritually dead. See that pale corpse! How insensible it is to every thing around! It sees not, hears not, feels not. The world moves on as it was wont to do, but it knows it not. The Spring may strew the fields with her fairest flowers, but it sees not their beauty. The Summer may cast her green mantle over the world, but it perceives not its grandeur. The Harvest, too, may cover the earth with the gifts of Heaven, but it feels no gratitude.

In vain does the sun fill heaven and earth with his glory; in vain does the moon draw aside her cloudy veil, and show her loveliness; in vain do the little stars dance in their blue halls, and drop upon the earth the skirts of their heavenly robes: it is equally insensible to all. So is it with the sinner in regard to things spiritual and eternal. He sees no beauty in Christ, feels not the power of his dying love, and is deaf to the earnest entreaties of his Spirit. The blessed truths of God's Word find no sympathy in his heart, awaken no feeling of love, and produce no spiritual change on his life. When he looks into the kingdom of Christ, he sees nothing but a black wilderness at which his heart recoils. To him the Sabbath is wearisome, and its services meaningless. They awaken no interest in his soul. His heart is like the flinty rock, over which a hundred springs have shed their life-giving influence in vain. Not a flower, not a weed, has crept over its brow to say that life is there. But when the Spirit of God comes forth, and breathes on the dry bones; when the Springtime of the Almighty sheds its influence over the dead, life—spiritual life—begins in the soul. The shadow of death flees away, and is succeeded by a life that "shines more and more unto the perfect day." Is not, then, the restoration of the soul a great work? Reader, where are you? Among the living or among the dead?

But though it is true that the Psalmist had "passed from death to life," and that the life which was lost through Adam's fall had been restored to him, yet the words used here, "He restoreth my soul," would seem rather to imply that he was restored from a state of backsliding. Such appears to be the meaning of the passage. Had David not been a backslider, it is difficult to see the direct propriety of the language, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in

the paths of righteousness." The latter clause, "he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness," would imply that he had deviated from these paths until his soul was restored. Had there been no previous declension in his life, there would have been no force in the expression, "He restoreth my soul," as the word "restoreth" means to bring back something that was lost or taken away.

David was, indeed, a backslider, and one, too, of a dark dye. Few of God's people have gone so far astray as he did. Many have put their hand to the plough, and looked back. Many have left the City of Destruction and returned. Many have begun the Divine life, and gone on happily for a season, but have seen their sun set in darkness. The seed has often fallen "upon stony places," often "among thorns." Seldom has it fallen upon a soil so excellent, so rich and fertile as that of the Psalmist, and suffered for a season so melancholy a blight. The member of the church has often stepped aside from the path of duty; the deacon, or elder, has fallen from his office; and the priest who ministered at the altar has been overcome by temptation; but few, very few of them, have been guilty of adultery, and polluted with blood. The offence of the Psalmist is, indeed, so heinous as to admit of no excuse.

Frequently, in the commission of crime, there are circumstances which lessen its atrocity, and incline us to look upon the criminal more favourably than we would otherwise have done. Ignorance, poverty, or great provocation, the early formation of bad habits, or the want of moral and religious training, may palliate the enormity of crime, and make us feel some degree of sympathy for its perpetrators. But in the case of David, no softening circumstances appear. Was he ignorant? No; he was well acquainted with the law and the prophets. Could he plead poverty? No; the Royal

Exchequer was full of gold. Could he plead the exciting power of provocation? No; Uriah had betrayed no trust, committed no offence, and given no cause to incur the king's displeasure. Could he plead as a ground of excuse the early formation of bad habits, or the want of moral and religious training? No; while yet a rustic youth, tending his father's flock, he was, by the Divine command, anointed as the future King of Israel, and was from that time under the guidance of the Spirit of God. So far, indeed, as the circumstances of the case are considered, they conspire to give a darker hue to the character of his sin. Sitting at ease in his palace, delivered from the wrath of his royal persecutor, victorious, whether at home or abroad, crowned with honour, flattered by prosperity, and greatly beloved by his people, it behoved him to devote his hours to Him who had brought him forth "from following the ewes." But no; the pious, but lascivious king was otherwise engaged. Instead of adoring God, he became enamoured of the fair daughter of Eliab, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Instead of exercising his purest powers in the service of the Most High, he became the victim of the corrupt propensities of his nature. He who had overthrown Goliath, routed the armies of Philistia, and taken numerous prisoners, was himself overcome, and taken captive by a weak, defenceless woman. "Tell it not in Gath," publish it not in the streets of the ungodly, lest the scorner scoff, and the heathen rail. But his disgrace did not end here. No; one sin prepares the way for another—one iniquity requires another to conceal it, until the path of the transgressor becomes unsafe. The logic of vice is always deceptive and dangerous, and, when carried out, seldom fails to destroy the peace of its votary. So was it with the Psalmist. The sin of the house-top prepared the way for his adulterous intrigue, and the seduction of Bath-

sheba. To cover his sin, Uriah, who was fighting the battle of his king and country, is recalled; and, being made drunk, is commanded to go to his house. He refuses. Failing to accomplish his purpose, the royal seducer resolves to destroy his brave and faithful servant, and deliberately writes a letter to the captain of his host to put the unsuspecting husband "in the forefront of the hottest battle, that he may be smitten and die." The order is executed. Uriah dies. While the blood of the murdered husband is scarcely cold, the usual decencies of life are rudely set aside, and are no barrier to the murderer's design. Bathsheba, after wearing for a week her weeds of woe, becomes the wife of the imperial gallant, and, in a few days, bears a son, the fruit of their criminal intercourse. Cruelty, crime, and hypocrisy, an utter defiance of all law, whether human or divine, painfully marks the character of David at this period of his life. When we contrast the opposite points of his character—when we view him as a devoted servant of God—and, at the same time, as an atrocious backslider, full of adultery, and stained with the blood of the innocent and brave, it is no easy matter to reconcile the two extremes, and believe that they belonged to one and the same man.

But it will be profitable to inquire into the reasons which cause the people of God to go astray and become backsliders. Such an inquiry must be attended with some advantage. Anything which puts the pious man in a better condition to withstand the evils that beset him in the divine life must certainly be precious to him. How anxious are most men to preserve their earthly treasures, and to adopt such means as are best fitted to secure them against all possible loss. Seldom do they fail in caution, shrewdness, and vigilance. To ensure their safety, rarely do they become careless or inattentive; but, on the contrary, they have often

disquietude by day, and sometimes watchings by night. If the men of the world take so much care to secure the earthly, should the people of God take less care to secure the heavenly treasure? No, certainly; the one is far more precious than the other. The earthly treasure is too often a source of care; the heavenly, always a state of peace. The former weakens the power of virtue; the latter strengthens them. The one often lowers the character; the other always raises it. The earthly treasure cannot remove the fear of death, or dispel the shadows of the grave; the heavenly can remove that fear, dispel these shadows, and enable us to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Any knowledge, therefore, which can place the Christian in a better position in which he can more successfully guard against the enemies of his heavenly treasure must be to him of very great importance. But to know the causes which make him backslide must be greatly advantageous in helping him to maintain a life becoming the gospel, or to preserve the riches of Divine grace. If a traveller be on his way to some distant land, and know the lurking-places of the thief, the robber, or the murderer, he will take care to avoid these haunts of danger and death. Ignorance of them might be attended with the loss of both life and treasure. Is the Christian not a traveller? Is he not on his way to a distant land, to his heavenly home? Are there not enemies, thieves, robbers, and murderers lurking by the way, and ready, always ready, to rob and destroy? Yes; the path which leads to the New Jerusalem is beset with dangers. Many a child of God has, by painful experience, borne witness to this truth, and "watered his couch with his tears." Many a wanderer, after suffering the stings of remorse, experiencing the hidings of his Father's face, or being for a time in a state like that of "*outer dark-*

ness," has, by the aid of Divine grace, returned to the fold of the Good Shepherd, humbled, yet rejoicing in God. Christian and Hopeful, pilgrims on their way to "the Better Land," were foolish enough to go "over the stile," and get into "By-path Meadow," the grounds of Giant Despair. In so doing, they chose not the path that was consistent with duty; but that which was agreeable to their ease and pleasure. Instead of obeying the Divine command, they obeyed their own selfishness, and brought upon themselves all the misery of Doubting Castle. How horrible the pit into which they fell! How fearful the gloom which gathered over them! Smooth and pleasing at first was the way that led through By-path Meadow; but, being further pursued, it became dark, dangerous, and alarming.

Such are all the ways of sin. Their approaches are fair, delightful, and enticing. The devil, the world, and the flesh, attired in silken robes, and adorned with every grace of fashion, stand at the gate of Destruction, and promise to their votaries all that appetite, desire, or ambition demands. How many, like Christian and Hopeful, are persuaded to go over the stile, and deviate from the rough and narrow way! And oh how many who have passed through the "wide gate," and pursued the "broad way," never retrace their footsteps, but lose themselves in that night which knows no sunrise! How thickly strewn, with the dying and the dead, is the smooth, yet dangerous path which leads through By-path Meadow! Could these raise their voices, and tell us their sad experience—could they describe the unhappy days and miserable nights which they have spent in that valley of death, such a picture of misery would be presented to the imagination, as to fill it with the utmost alarm. The pious martyr in Bedford Jail has, indeed, given us, in his immortal dream, some idea of the wretched state of the

backsliding soul. And, oh! let that description of piety and genius be a beacon light to warn the pilgrim of the Cross to beware of stepping aside from that path which, though often rough, conducts him to the golden gates of his everlasting home.

When a child of God becomes a backslider, his beginnings in the downward path are small, gradual, and almost, if not altogether, insensible. He does not desert the service of God, and enlist in that of Satan, in a day. His heart is not prepared for so sudden a change. Such an idea would awaken his fears, shock his conscience, and inspire him with horror. The impression of a state, so painful and alarming, would, in all probability, restrain him in the path of sin. Did even a bad man see the end to which his evil deeds were leading him, would he proceed in his guilty career? Would the idler persevere in his idleness, the liar in his lies, the thief in his thefts, or the villain in his villanies, if he foresaw the pain, misery, and disgrace which he was bringing upon himself? No; he would sacrifice his lusts, and abandon his evil ways. His very selfishness would come to his aid, and rescue him from his crimes. How few who go astray cast their eye to the close of that path which is so full of darkness! How thoughtlessly do the giddy multitudes spend their days, as if this life was a dream or an idle game! How many devote their lives to folly and fashion, as if God was a fop or a fool! How many serve him as if he was a hard taskmaster, or a dangerous enemy! But when the believer steps aside, walks in the counsel of the ungodly, stands in the way of sinners, and, perhaps, sits in the seat of the scorner, his progress towards any of these stages is by exceedingly small degrees. His graces insensibly fade, his fervour gradually cools, his Christian activities slowly languish and die, and his faith,

love, profession, and practice, become a melancholy ruin. Behold that graceful flower! How pleasing to the eye! How heavenly its hues! How sweet the fragrance of its breath! It seems as fresh and lovely as if it was just taken out of Paradise. But ere its beauty has ripened, a change comes over it. Its tints begin to lose their sweetness, and daily assume a duller hue. Slowly and sadly it pines away in its loveliness, and at last becomes a withered and lonely ruin. Why did the blighting finger of decay touch a form so heavenly ere it reached the perfection of its beauty? Did some *evil eye* fall on it? Did the spirit of evil, admonished by its innocence and purity, blanch all its comeliness? No, no; there was a little worm which nestled and gnawed at its root, and sucked the juices that kept it alive. Backsliding one, behold in this flower an emblem of thy state! Were not the graces of thy heart once fresh and fair? Did they not unfold their beauty to the Sun of Righteousness, and rejoice in the light of his grace? How blessed wert thou among the flowers which grew in the garden of the Lord! In that sweet spot there was no lack of the dew and the sunshine of heaven. But change, slow, very slow in its progress, stole over thy heart. The little worm of corruption, enfeebled by want, began to revive. Cherished by thine attentions, it grew, it strengthened, it crawled forth into activity. Then thy graces began to lose their brightness, and insensibly fade away. Then did each day, and week, and month bear witness that the work of the secret destroyer went on, till at length there were no heavenly traces left to tell that the footsteps of God had ever been there. It is sad to mark the leaves of autumn as, day by day, they fall from their fellows, and leave, naked and lone, their parent tree; it is sad to cast the eye over the desolate fields, and to hear the wail of the wintry winds;

it is sad to see the ship, which lately skimmed the deep with so much majesty, become a blackened and miserable wreck, cast up on the shore, like a discarded weed of the ocean; it is sad to see a young man, who lately walked forth in the excellency of his strength, in the last stage of a wasting disease, changed into the shadow of what he once was; but sadder, far sadder, is it to see a child of God, clothed with the graces of the Spirit, and walking in the beauty of holiness, cast aside his heavenly robes, roll himself in the dunghill, and appear once more in his native deformity. If, in this earth, there is anything which can, for a moment, repress the joy of heaven, or disperse the horror of hell, it must be the sight of such a one who has thus trodden under foot the blood of the Saviour, "and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace."

If, then, the first steps of the backsliding one are so small, as to be almost insensible, what is the cause of these steps which lead in the downward path? To know and to shun such a cause, must be important to every child of God, as it would enable him to maintain his religious consistency, and to walk, with unbroken peace, to his Father's home.

The chief, if not the only cause, which makes a believer step aside from the right path, is the wrong direction in which his thoughts are allowed to proceed. Instead of thinking of earthly things, so as to make them glorify God, he thinks of them, so as to increase his pleasures, add to his importance, or satisfy his ambition. The first movement of a believer in the downward path takes place when he separates in thought, or in action, the things of earth from those of heaven. When, for a time, he thinks, judges, reasons, or acts, with no direct or indirect intention of honouring God, it is plain that his mind will, to a certain extent, lose its spirituality, and become imbued with the spirit of the

world. Such is the nature of the mind, that it takes the character of the things with which it is chiefly conversant. If these be carnal, the mind will become carnal; if these be spiritual, the mind will be spiritual. As water partakes of the qualities of the channel through which it flows; as the breezes of heaven partake of the character of the fields over which they pass; as the plant sympathises with the climate in which it grows, so the mind sympathises with the objects of thought, and becomes a partaker of their spirit and tone. Were it not so, man would be incapable of moral and religious training. All instruction, whether by precept, or example, whether of a virtuous, or a vicious character, would leave on the mind no impression, favourable or unfavourable, to piety and virtue; and, in such a condition, he would ever remain in a state of moral childhood. No progress, either in virtue or in vice, would be made, and the truth of God's Word would lose its heavenly power. But, blessed be God, it is not so. Heaven has made a different arrangement. The believer can, if he will, go forward in the Divine life. He can add virtue to virtue, here a little and there a little, until he reach the full stature of a man in Christ. There is no necessity that he should either stand still or fall away. God does not wish his children to leave the fold and wander into the wilderness; but, on the contrary threatens them when they go astray; yea, he goes into the wilderness, brings home the wanderers, and rejoices over them more than the ninety-and-nines that went not astray.

When David stepped aside from the command, and became a backslider, his walk on the palace roof, from which he beheld Bathsheba at eventide, was not the beginning of his fall. It is not easy to understand how a man, distinguished for his eminence in virtue and piety

could, on any known principle of human nature, suddenly change his character, and become covered with the blackest of crimes. The progress of crime, even among those who know not the truth, is slow and gradual. The drunkard, the thief, the robber, the adulterer, and the murderer, are not formed in a day. No; much time, with unfavourable circumstances, is required for the growth of such character. If so, is it not reasonable to conclude that David, who seemed a pattern of godliness, had, for a considerable time, been falling away? Is it unreasonable to conclude that long before he saw the fair daughter of Eliab, his heart had been gradually conforming to the follies, vices, and corruptions of the world? Is it in the least probable that, before his adulterous intrigue, he was walking as closely with God as he had been accustomed to do? The course of events, and the circumstances of his life, for some time before his fall, were certainly of such a nature as to slacken the ties of religion, cool the warmth of his piety, and harden the feelings of his heart. He had lately been at war with the Philistines, and with the Moabites, and with the Syrians; and, at this very time, he was besieging Rabbah, the capital of the Ammonites. He would, therefore, be made familiar with such scenes of blood, cruelty, and plunder, as were fitted to outrage his better feelings, and to vitiate the whole man. There was, too, his great and sudden change of fortune. From the condition of a fugitive, an outcast, an outlaw, he was raised to the honours of a throne. Victorious at home and abroad, pampered and enfeebled by the smiles of fortune, with his name a household word among the nations, he must have been strong in faith had his religious principles stemmed the current of so strong a tide of prosperity. It is not strange, therefore, that in such circumstances as these, he should gradually fall away, and

become weak, as any other unsanctified man. Thousands have thus gone astray. Similar causes are now at work, sapping the foundations of piety, and preparing the believer for a fall. The moment that a child of God begins to think and act with no intention of honouring God, that moment he turns away from Christ, and prepares the elements of his future fall. It is true that he may, for a longer or shorter time, maintain the outward appearance of a man of God. He may be as regular in his attendance at the house of God, as frequent in prayer, as openly pious, as industrious, sober, and zealous, as he was wont to be; yet, at the same time, there is going on in the heart a secret, silent change, a process of corruption, which will, by and bye, reveal itself in some act of folly, vice, or neglect of duty. This is quite natural. When the heart becomes corrupted to a certain extent, the conscience is unable to restrain the evil inclinations. Hence falsehood, unjust dealing, sensual indulgence, and every form of vice appear. So sure as the tree, when permitted to grow, will cast forth its fruit; so sure as the fountain, when filled beyond its measure, will overflow; so sure will the heart, when it fosters its corruptions, embody these in some outward act of wickedness.

From this cause, many of God's people become either lukewarm, or fall away. From fashion, ignorance, or habit, they seem to act in their worldly calling, pleasures, and amusements, as if these had nothing to do with their religious profession. Hence it is difficult to draw a line of distinction between the mere worldly man and the professing Christian; and it is often found that the followers of Jesus can drive as hard a bargain as those of the world. Religion, when it is thus divorced from business and enjoyment, and confined to the sanctuary and the privacy of home, cannot remain long in a healthful condition. It must be the com-

panion of our hours, whether in the workshop, the counting-house, the field, or the study, if we would maintain in our hearts, the spirit of the Great Master. Religion cannot be confined. It lives and grows by exercise. Unless it be made the ground of all our actions, its beauty and power will soon fade away; and the professor, instead of being a light shining in a dark place, will become a scandal to religion, and a stumbling-block to others on their way to heaven. One inconsistent professor will do more harm to the cause of Jesus than twenty infidels, as he bears daily witness that the Balm of Gilead has no power to cure the wounds and bruises and putrifying sores of the diseased soul; and thus he is doing what the enemies of the Cross greatly desire. Many also who see such an example, and who might become followers of the Lamb, are kept away, and continue their course of sin.

Reader, are you a believer? If so, how do you serve God? Think, reflect, examine your life. Be in no haste. Are your thoughts and feelings, your words and actions, the offspring of a conscience enlightened by the gospel of Christ? Are you a new man thus walking in Jesus? Do you make your business, your amusements, and the objects of your earthly ambition glorify God? Is it otherwise? Do you conduct your earthly pursuits according to the fashion of the world? Do you buy, and sell, and get gain, only to increase your wealth, your importance, or your earthly enjoyments? Is the heavenly tie cast aside, when you step into the world of business and pleasure? Do you find it a clog on your desires and activities in the gay and busy scenes of life? When you leave the sanctuary, the family altar, and the secrecy of the closet, do you also leave behind you that sacred tie which should bind to heaven all the out-goings of your soul? Are you trying to accomplish

that impossibility of which Jesus once spoke? Can you "serve God and mammon"? You cannot serve both God and the world. You cannot at the same time be a child of the night and of the day. If not, you must either think, and feel, and act according to the mind of God, or resolve to serve the "devil, the world, and the flesh." Can you have two altars, one for God and another for Satan? Can light have any communion with darkness? Can there be a league between Heaven and Hell? If not, you must either serve God in all that you think and do, or you cannot serve him at all. If you serve him not in the world, what is the value of your service in the sanctuary? Is it not daring hypocrisy and presumptuous folly? Would you betray your Lord in the world, and salute him with a kiss in the sanctuary? Would you come into the Holy Place with the price of blood in your hands?

If you would avoid the path of the backslider, make your worldly calling and enjoyments as much a part of your religion as your services in the sanctuary. Most men labour and enjoy themselves as mere acts of private selfishness, and not as a duty which they owe to God. The command—"Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work," is as positive, as sacred, as its counterpart, "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." The same forgetfulness, the same purity of motive, the same loving obedience, the same sanctity of heart, which are required in the duties of the Sabbath ought no less to regulate our conduct in all the labours and enjoyments of the six days. Are not both parts of the commandment equally divine? Were not both of them written by the finger of God? Is the one, then, not as much an object of religious obedience as the other? If so, the state of the heart and mind, in the pursuits of the six days ought to be as religious, as full of holy and devoted

obedience, as that which characterises the duties of the Lord's day. Were we, during the services of that sacred day, to indulge a worldly spirit—to think of buying, selling, and getting gain—of plans of ambition—of parties of pleasure, or of any other selfish design, would not our conscience reprove us as guilty of no ordinary sin? Yes; we would feel that we had outraged the sanctity of that blessed day, and done that which was evil in the sight of God. Is it less a breach of the command to indulge a spirit of selfishness during the pursuits of the six days? If a man enter the workshop, the counting-house, or the study, or engage in any sphere of activity, with no higher motive than selfishness, does he not also outrage the sanctity even of the six days? Is there not absent that spirit of religious obedience which should penetrate all his actions? Yes, certainly; and if so, ought not his conscience to reprove him as severely as when he tramples under foot the spirit of the Lord's-day? Yes; it is equally a breach of the command. The six days have a sanctity, a practical sanctity, no less important as regards the welfare of man and the glory of God, than the Sabbath itself, with all its pure and elevating duties.

Dear reader, that you may be the more resolved to glorify God in your business and enjoyments, know that the path of the backslider is dark and painful. The breach of the moral law is always attended with penal suffering. This is implied in the very conception of law. Were there nothing penal implied in it, it would amount to no more than good advice, and would not cause the transgressor to fear. But it is very different. None can trample on moral law and escape its penalty. God and reason and human experience have, in all ages of the world, borne witness that this is true. "We are so constituted that, although external circumstances may conspire to conceal our crime, yet retribution com-

mences immediately after its commission. No sooner has the murderer accomplished his fell purpose, than the agonies of an aroused, accusing conscience begin to torment him. Sleep forsakes his eyelids; the darkness of the night is peopled with horrid phantoms. They crowd around his pillow, and shriek the name of his dark crime into his ear. Daylight brings no relief. He may go forth into the busy world, and mingle with the bustling crowds of his fellow-men; he may try to lose himself in the distractions of guilt, and amuse himself in the paths of folly; yet, in all these scenes, the phantom is at his elbow, gazing at him with his hollow eyes, appalling him with his speechless accusations; and, high above many voices, the strains of music, the roar of cannon, or the peal of thunder, the death-shriek of his victim rings through his soul; for the powers of nature, as well as the hand of man, are alike directed against him as a common enemy. What a fallacy is crime, seeing that it makes a brave man fear life more than death. And not only is this self-inflicting retribution attendant upon murder, the highest of all crime, but, in a proportionate degree, it accompanies every infringement of the moral law. We may commit crime without detection, but we can no more commit crime without punishment than we can infuse poison into the blood without injury. It is one of the most subtle workings of our inmost constitution, and is in strict keeping with the analogies of nature. We expose our physical constitution to the action of forces inimical to it, whether of damp or cold or heat, and we suffer accordingly; and if we expose our moral condition to the action of crime, we must entail upon ourselves, as an unavoidable consequence, the punishment of an avenging conscience—a moral palsy, a wounded self-respect, a loss of that conscious rectitude, which can alone make a man decisive in action,

bold in danger, and generous and good in all things. Take a case in point. There is a man who has broken the laws of his country—has stolen, forged, or perjured himself; the vengeance of social justice overtakes him; he is deprived of the rights of citizenship, and confined in prison, whence, after an assigned period, he comes out, and we say that his punishment is over;—it is not so, his punishment is going on within; and it will probably go on as long as he lives. He has lost caste; he has destroyed his self-respect; henceforth he will never feel the same proud integrity among his fellow-men. There is a foul brand on his forehead, a felon-feeling in his heart, which make his lips falter, when he pronounces the words of probity and honour, for they will fall from him like lies. Society may welcome him back, may honour him with its most distinguished gifts, but it is in vain. He will drag the fetid carcase of his moral life through all the world's fairest scenes, and, though men may bow before him, yet the applause of honesty will be his most bitter reproof; for to himself he will always be a lost, ruined man. Such is the terrible price of departing from rectitude. Human law may assign punishment, but it cannot atone for the loss of that feeling of spotless honour, that consciousness of innocence which, when once gone, can never be regained, and that whispering of the accusing self, which will blight the fairest life and blast the happiest hour."

But the penalty inflicted by conscience for the breach of moral law is not all that follows the transgressor. The misery of an accusing conscience is not indeed easy to bear. If it be painful to suffer the reproach of a foe, the frown of a friend, or the scowl of the multitude, how much more painful must it be to suffer the reproach, the frown, or the scowl of conscience! From the former we may flee, and

find rest; but from the latter we cannot flee and find rest. Conscience dwells within us, and makes its voice heard, whether in the palace or the cottage, whether in the church or the chapel, or in the giddy maze of folly and vice. Like the eye of God, it is present with us everywhere. But besides the inward, there is also the outward punishment of sin. This is what we would expect.

Were the Divine Ruler to make no open display of his justice, to show no outward displeasure at iniquity, men might become bold in sin, regardless of all moral law, and say there is no God. But to prevent such a state of things, and the nameless ills which would follow, he sends his judgments upon the earth. These are witnesses that testify to man, that God reigns, and also punishes the workers of iniquity—witnesses, in every nation, in every age of man. When our first parents fell from their obedience, did not grim death come forth and bear faithful witness of the crime? Did not the earth, once so fair and fertile, lay aside her former beauty and beneficence, and as witness present her bosom, clothed with thorns and thistles and briers? Did not the flowers of Eden bear witness when they stripped themselves of their fairest hues, and cast them as mites into the treasury of evidence? Did not the golden tie which bound the world in peace bear witness, when it fell asunder, and let loose on the earth war and famine and pestilence? Does not the feeble wail of the babe, when it plants its tiny footstep on the threshold of life, bear witness of man's ruin and fall? Does not disease, with its hundred voices and hideous forms, bear witness that "the gold has become dim, and the most fine gold has changed"? Does not the churchyard, with its graceful monument, or its moss-grown tombstone, bear witness from age to age, that man in his first estate has trampled on the Divine command? Does

not the opened grave, with its mouldering dead, cry aloud with hollow, ghastly voice, and tell of man's first folly and sin? Does not the tear of the widow, the cry of the orphan, and the sigh of the bereaved and desolate mother, testify to the world that God is constantly reminding it of its fallen state, and of the punishment that must follow sin?

But the penalty of Adam's fall is not the only witness by which God testifies his wrath, and reproves the world of sin. Had no other spoken, its warning voice should have restrained the sinner, and turned him into the paths of righteousness. But no; heedless of this voice of God—reckless, as if his quiver was exhausted, and his buckler cast away—man added sin to sin, multiplied iniquity, and filled the earth with every form of violence. God was not in all his thoughts, which "were evil, and that continually." Then walked forth in open day the atheist and apostate, the liar, the swearer, and adulterer, the thief, the robber, and murderer, "being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." Every power of evil which the powers of darkness could suggest—every degrading, ruinous, and licentious passion which they could inspire, took possession of the human heart. Then followed scenes of daring, desperate crime, deeds of so dark a dye that the sun had never beheld. As years rolled on, iniquity multiplied and grew, till man became alarmed at the face of man, and sought either his neighbour's blood, or the cleft of the rock. Amidst the violence of crime which filled the earth, the Great Father looked through the cloud which had gathered over his fairest work, and repented that

he had made man. The beautiful earth, designed as the garden of heaven, to rear the young plant, and to train it for immortality and bliss, had become the region of the shadow of death. Virtue seemed to have no place to rest the sole of her foot, and, returning to heaven, took her seat beside the throne. But, behold, far in the distance, appears another witness flying towards the earth, clothed in darkness, and carrying in its bosom, the destroying storm. God in his justice, yes, even in his love, has sent this messenger of wrath on a fatal mission to man. Had not the last drop filled the cup of iniquity, and made it overflow? Was not the harvest of sin in full ear, and ripe for the sickle of judgment? Was it not time that the Great Husbandman should cut down the vine, which was bearing only poisonous grapes? Should he still spare it, and water it with the prayers, the tears, and the solemn warnings of Noah? Would his "Spirit always strive with it"? Would a hundred and twenty years steal over it, and not exhaust his patience and forbearance? In the midst of approaching wrath, while the sword of vengeance was drawn and ready to descend, men ate and drank, and reeled and swore. Everywhere was heard the sound of revelry and strife. Everywhere they were planning, plotting, and devising schemes of pleasure, mischief, or guilty enterprise. The hunter, careless of all, and eager only for the joy of the chase, was ranging the wild forest. The trader was active and watchful, in buying and selling and getting gain. The husbandman was in the vineyard, gathering the grape, or filling the wine-press. The reaper was in the field, plying the sickle, and gathering in the yellow grain. On the summit of the hill, the patient ox was treading out the corn, or dragging the sharp-teethed machine over the threshing-floor. The bride, full of hope and cherishing the secret, silent joy of her heart, was attiring

herself in the quietude of her chamber, and preparing to meet the bridegroom. The shrill voices of the children, as they gamboled in the highway, came floating on the winds, fragrant with the voice of flowers. All moved on in the giddy maze of mirth and mischief, folly and falsehood, violence and vice. On a sudden the scene is changed. A strange cloud gathers on the brow of heaven. It darkens, extends, and embraces the whole sky. Now the lightning leaps from its hiding-place, and for a moment wraps the world in fire. Then comes forth the tumultuous roar of the thunder, rejoicing in its almighty strength, and making the mountains tremble, and the nations fear. The footsteps of the sun are no longer seen. Day seems alarmed, and is fast fleeing away. In the distance is heard the bleating of the sheep, the braying of the ass, the bellowing of the ox, and the roaring of the lion. Men's hearts fail them. Fearful, they seek for shelter; they hide themselves in the inner chamber, in the secret den, in the cavern of the mountain. In vain do they flee for safety. "The fountains of the great deep are broken up," and "the windows of heaven are opened." The avenging waters come forth in their fury, and hasten to fulfil their mission of ruin and death. On every hand, nothing is heard but the rush and roar of waters, and the doleful cry of despairing multitudes. From steep to steep, from hill to hill, from mountain to mountain, the miserable crowds are seen to flee. Vain are all effort and skill. The avenger climbs the lofty mountain, pursues the track of its victims, and is again at their heels. From peak to peak, from cliff to cliff, with hopeless steps they hurry to and fro, wildly seeking for a refuge, and imploring their gods to save them—till the last faint shriek of the last man is lost among the booming of the contending waves! Where, O godless man, are now thy hopes? Does thy

unbelief of judgment now avail thee? Where are all thy dreams of folly, sensuality, and sin? Did thy dark deeds comfort thee in the last sad hour? Did thine adulteries, thy cruelties and crimes, whisper peace to thy soul, as thy last groan was hushed by the wave? Did not the rushing tide, with accusing voice, speak to thee in thunder, and say, O enemy of God, perish, and let thy voice be heard no more, and thy face no longer seen in the earth! Die, die!—for ever die! Let the lofty monument, the gay city, the proud palace, the stately tower, and all the works of thy hands, be swept away as the chaff before the wind. Let the judgment which now blots out thy being from the earth be a witness to all generations, that God is the avenger of sin.

But the Flood and the penalty of the Fall, are not the only witnesses which have testified against sin. These, though solemn and terrible, have proved insufficient to restrain the wickedness of man. God has, through all ages, been speaking by judgment to the world, and reproving it for its deeds of evil. To tell of the ruin of cities, and kingdoms, and empires, caused by pride, corruption, and oppression, by avarice, luxury, and disobedience to Divine law, would be to repeat a great portion of the history of our race. Seldom, or never, has there been a city, or a nation, noted for its vices, which has not been humbled, ruined, or left desolate. Whether we contemplate the cities of the plain, buried in the Dead Sea, or the ten plagues which afflicted the land of the Pharaohs, or the red tide that swept away the pursuing host, or the destruction of the Holy City, and the dispersion of the Jews, or all other judgments which have fallen on mankind, we cannot fail to see that God is the Avenger of sin.

But God visits with outward punishment, not only cities, and nations, and armies, and empires, but likewise the

sinner, considered as an individual. The pestilence which wasteth by night, and the arrow that flieth by day, are not confined to the multitude. The shaft of justice often reaches the heart of the oppressor, the liar, the murderer, and blasphemer. The thunderbolt can destroy the solitary oak as well as the extensive forest. The single rose may wither and die, whilst its companions, on the neighbouring stem, may flourish and bloom. In his works, the Most High is unconfined and free. At his pleasure, he can raise up, or he can cast down; he can save, or he can destroy. From the beginning of our race, he has not spared the transgressor. The first breach of the Divine law, and its fearful consequences, is a solemn warning to the sinner. If one man, for one sin, could entail such a display of penal wrath, what has the backslider, or the offender, to expect, but a "fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation"? Has the lapse of years softened the severity of God's law? Has sin become less hateful to him, than when its dark form first rose before his eye? Has the brightness of his glory faded? Has the dust of ages soiled the beauty of his character? No, impossible; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Did his justice spare the envious Cain? Did his individuality save him from judgment? No; the curse of Heaven tracked his footsteps, and doomed him a fugitive and a vagabond, while the earth herself becoming obstinate, refused to yield him her accustomed strength. Wretched and miserable, he exclaimed in his agony, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." But Cain and his parents are not the only instances of judgment. God has not thus left man to grope for examples of his displeasure. These in the sacred page are numerous, crying aloud, warning the sinner, and telling him that his individuality is no barrier to judgment.

Think of Saul, the stately Benjamite, who was for a time the popular and victorious king of the Israelites. Is not his brief, unhappy reign a beacon light, admonishing every one to beware of trifling with the Divine commands, and of fostering a jealous, deceitful, and malicious spirit? Commissioned by God to execute his wrath against Amalek, the foolish and selfish Saul, under the pretence of piety, spared the best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the fatlings, and the lambs, and failed to accomplish the strict command with which he had been entrusted. Did his disobedience pass unpunished? Did his high position shield him? Did his royal robe and jewelled crown protect him from the wrath of Heaven? No, no; sin, though leagued with earthly greatness, finds no favour with God. To him, the prince and the peasant are alike; in his presence, rags and royalty are the same. So was it with Saul; from the hour of disobedience, God departed from him. A dark cloud gathered over him. The diadem which he wore lost its brightness, and passed to the brow of a shepherd boy. An evil spirit haunted his dreams by day, and his visions by night. His palace lost its enjoyments, and seemed full of hideous spectres. Forsaken by God, pressed on every side by the ancient foe of his country, he sought the counsel of a sorceress, and the sympathy of a departed seer. Miserable man! where now are all thy dreams of ambition, the long line of kings coming forth from thy loins, and losing itself in the midst of a far distant age? How does the imperial purple pale before thine eye! How sad and fearful to thee are the words of destiny! "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" "Wherefore dost thou ask of me, seeing the Lord is departed from thee, and is become thine enemy? The Lord hath done to thee, as he spake by me; for the Lord hath rent thy kingdom out of

thine hand, and given it to thy neighbour, even to David; because thou obeyedst not the voice of the Lord, nor executedst his fierce wrath against Amalek; therefore hath the Lord done this thing unto thee this day. . . . Moreover, to-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me." Terrible words! To-morrow's sun beheld the last sad scene of his life; and the heights of Gilboa looked down on the kingly suicide, and his three slaughtered sons. Thus through the breach of the Divine command were lost the favour of God, the honours of a throne, and his three beloved sons; the hopeless, guilty father perishing by a self-inflicted death. "Ye mountains of Gilboa, let there be no dew, neither let there be rain upon you, nor fields of offerings, for there the shield of the mighty was vilely cast away, the shield of Saul, as though he had not been anointed with oil."

But we cannot afford time to record at length all the instances that are to be found in the Word of God. These are indeed numerous, and present themselves like a cloud of witnesses. Though all of them testify against sin, yet each of them has its separate and peculiar mission to man. Each of them comes to him clothed like an ancient, aged seer, covered with the dust of ages, and speaks to him in a grave, hollow voice, saying, Beware, touch not the unclean thing; shun the deadly leprosy of sin. Flee from the path of the destroyer, and come not near its dwelling. Give no ear to its fair speeches; trust not its gay, tempting attire. Be not seduced by its promises, nor ensnared by its smiles. Wouldst thou embitter thy days by destroying the flowers which bloom along life's journey? Wouldst thou thus despise the gifts of Heaven? Art thou wiser than thy Maker? Canst thou weigh in the balances of truth the events of thy life, and mark the happiness or the misery which lies clustered around them? If not, listen to the

voices of the past. They come not to thee with the lip of flattery, or the tongue of falsehood. They are heralds, sent by Heaven to warn thee, and to point out the rocks and quicksands on which so many have suffered shipwreck. They are lights planted on the path of time, to guide the feet of the traveller, lest he stumble or fall on his way to Zion. Does Lot's wife alarm thee? Does she lift her voice in vain? Does the judgment which fell upon her, fill thee with fear? How often has her offence been thine! Hast thou not, again and again, looked back on the city of Destruction? What security hast thou that thou wilt pass unpunished? Does Gehazi show thee his leprosy? Dost thou behold him as white as snow, leaving the presence of his master? Reader, if thou be a servant, use not thy master's name falsely, to gratify the lust of gain. Shouldst thou dare, will the gifts of Naaman enrich thee? Will the changes of garments add to thy comfort, and the talents of silver augment thy peace? Never; as a leper thou shalt be shunned and despised, and perhaps see thine ill-gotten gains melt away as the snow-wreath before the sun. Hast thou coveted thy neighbour's wife? Hast thou taken away from the poor man his one "little ewe lamb, that did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter"? If so, what is thy doom? "Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine house,"—evil which will destroy the peace of thy home, and perhaps make thee a lonely exile. Hast thou coveted thy neighbour's field, his goods, his house, or his vineyard? Hast thou used unfair means to satisfy thine evil desire? Know that the God of Naboth spared not the proud Jezebel, nor her husband, though clothed with the imperial purple. How, then, will he spare thee? Will the obscurity of thy position

shelter thee? Does not the little flower which blooms unheeded by the wayside, feel the breath of Winter as well as its more powerful neighbour? Is not the power of God felt through all his works? Escape thou canst not; thy sin will find thee out. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Hast thou kept back thy gift from the altar, and covered thine avarice with a lie? Let Ananias and his spouse counsel thee. Listen to the voices of their crime; they tell thee a tale of judgment, a tale of death. Wouldst thou stand before thy Judge with thy soul dark with avarice, and thy lips foul with a falsehood? Know, that with such a spirit, thou canst not expect the smile of Heaven, the increase of thy flocks, and herds, and houses, and lands, or the constant supply of that grace which will enrich thy soul, comfort thy heart, and enable thee to persevere to the end. Cast away thy disguises; let the garments of Satan perish. Put on the white robe of the Great Friend, and let thy path be that of sincerity and truth.

Having pointed out the cause and the punishment of backsliding, it will now be proper to inquire how the soul which has thus sinned is to be restored. Such an inquiry will be useful and interesting. Whatever soothes and comforts the heart, whatever increases our faith and hope, whatever makes the earth appear more beautiful, more like the Garden of Paradise, is worthy of our deepest regard and attention. Vain, indeed, are riches, and honours, and the smiles of the great when inward peace has passed away and left little behind but remorse, anxiety, or fear. Joyless, then, are the pleasures which the world can afford, and shadowy its promises and smiles. In such a state the soul is like a sweet harp whose strings have lost their harmony, and which give forth nothing but discordant sounds. Ere

it can regain its many sweet voices, it requires the hand of the musician to adjust and to weave them in harmony. The Great Artist who formed the soul, and made it a sweet harp to praise him, can attune its powers, soften their discord, and turn them into the most blessed harmony. It matters not how tuneless, how discordant, how painfully harsh they may be, his skill can change them into the most pleasing concord, and adapt all their chords to the voices of heaven. How many hearts, once so full of discord, once so much at variance with the songs of the redeemed, have, by the goodness of God, been attuned and brought into harmony with the spirit of Christ! How "great a multitude which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, now stand before the throne, and before the Lamb," "harping with their harps," and singing "blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever"! These, too, once had their relapses, their anxieties, their penitential tears, but, by the grace of God, came forth like gold purified by the furnace.

In order that the backslider be restored, it is necessary that he feel his guilt, or be made sensible of his sin. To him who has been walking in the way of transgressors, this state of mind is essential. Without it the soul cannot be restored. If a sinner see not his sin, he can neither shun nor bewail that sin. Can he be sorry for what he does not feel, or avoid that which he does not perceive? Certainly not; as well might we expect a blind man to shun the stumbling-stone, or the bird, unconscious of the snare, the hidden danger. To avoid sin, therefore, he must feel his guilt, otherwise he can have no path of escape. To have this state of mind he must examine his life by the light of God's Word. Here the path is plain and natural, having

no mystery hanging over it. Every backslider, every sinner without distinction, who has faith in the Word, can put it in practice, and have a lively sense of his sin. Should any one wish to have the knowledge and to feel the beauty of a flower, he must turn his eye upon it, and contemplate it under the light of day. Unless he do so, he will neither perceive its beauties nor enjoy the pleasing emotions which it inspires. In vain will the eye continue to gaze if the object of vision be covered with darkness! In vain will the light shine if the eye be closed or turned in a different direction! The law of God in nature must be obeyed. The light, the flower, the eye must combine, otherwise there will be no sensation, no knowledge, no perception of beauty. In a similar way must the wanderer obtain the knowledge of his guilty condition, and feel upon his conscience a painful sense of his sin. The eye of the mind, that within us which thinks, judges, and reasons, must be placed on the doings of the life, and contemplate them in the light of Divine law and of the spirit of Christ. Unless these heavenly lights shine, in vain will the inward eye continue to gaze! The light of the world, of the great multitude, of the customs and fashions of the age, will be of no avail; but, like the changing meteor of the moss, will mislead our footsteps and pave the way to misery and death. Nor is it enough to take a rapid and partial view of the life. Such a view will not serve the purpose. The inward eye must dwell upon it, pore over its dark pages, and, if possible, leave not a line, a word, unread or misunderstood. Let this be done slowly, deliberately, continuously, till the conscience is stung by remorse, and the heart oppressed with its evil deeds. Let the heart ascend in prayer to God, saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there

be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Thus to know and feel our corruption, weakness, and sin is the root of all improvement, moral and religious. This statement, though it may not appear at first view, is yet not the less true. No man, capable of correct thought, will seek to improve unless he be conscious of some deficiency. The desire for improvement, whether in art, or science, or morals, or religion, or whatever it may be, has its origin from the knowledge of some defect within us, or of some imperfection without us. Would the husbandman prune the vine did he fear no want of grapes? Would he improve his vineyard could it bear no more vines? Would the student cultivate his mind, pursue the path of science, and become pale over the midnight lamp, did he feel no want of knowledge, no lack of intellectual power? Would the painter, the poet, and musician labour to improve in the fine arts did they feel no deficiency in these interesting and delightful pursuits? It is said that a young artist of much promise, who, having finished a very beautiful painting, and after a careful examination of the work, could not perceive in it the smallest defect, shed tears. These were not tears of joy; they were tears of sorrow, bearing witness that his genius had reached its boundary line. He knew that he could not advance in his art when he could perceive no defect in his painting. He could not improve where he saw nothing to improve. And is it different with the backslider who seeks the restoration of his soul? If, as a sinner, he see no defect in his life—if, in his conscience, he feel no sense of sin, how then can he remove what he does not perceive, or find relief from guilt which he does not feel? It appears, therefore, that in proportion to the extent of view which he has of his sin, and, to the depth that he

feels its power, so large is the field of improvement that lies before him. He who sees and feels little in his life to deplore can have little in his life to improve. While in this state of mind, he will neither become eminent in piety nor distinguished for virtue; and in no way will he excel in the graces of the Christian life. On the contrary, let him who feels that he is the chief of sinners rejoice while he bewails his sins. Let him mingle the tear of sorrow with the tear of joy. He has far to travel ere he reach the boundary line of his spiritual genius. Great is the field of improvement that lies before him; eminent that piety and virtue which may yet be his. Before him lies a bleak wilderness, which may be turned into a beautiful garden, bearing fruits sweeter to the taste than those of eastern climes, and flowers fairer to the eye than those of the earthly paradise. Backslider, is this thy state? Dost thou feel that thou art the chief of sinners? If so, lift thy heart to heaven, and bless God that the scales have fallen from thine eyes, that thou canst now see the shadows of death deepen around thee. Thank him though thou canst not yet see a star in heaven. Know that the shades of the night are as necessary to thy wellbeing as the sunshine of the day. Know that before God said "Let there be light" "darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." "Let not thy heart be troubled," as if there were no hope. The Spirit of God moves over the dark, troubled waters of thy soul, is with thee amidst these shadows of death, and is willing to guide thy footsteps into the light of the Sun of Righteousness.

But further, in order that the soul be restored, it is necessary that the backslider confess and forsake his sin. Confession without a departure from sin is not pleasing to God, and in no way can it benefit the wanderer. It is

otherwise. Instead of softening, it hardens the heart. It is like a path, the longer it is trodden the harder it becomes, and the more difficult to impress. To confess sin, and to continue its practice, destroys the heart, insults God, and brings down the wrath of Heaven. He who has a conscience enlightened by the gospel, and yet perseveres in sin, will soon, if he change not, become one of the most hopeless and miserable of men. He is sinning against love, against conscience, against the clearest light, and is wilfully speeding down to the chambers of death. Hard, indeed, must be the heart, and presumptuous the life, of that man who can draw near to God, acknowledge his sin, and then return to the service of the devil, the world, and the flesh. Far, very far, has he walked in the way of sinners; and, in a few steps, he may sit in the seat of the scorner. Backslider, if thou confess, be sure to forsake sin. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked." Know that sin is progressive; and is a plant of sure and steady growth; and the longer it grows, its roots take a deeper hold of the heart, and are more difficult to uproot. If thou meanest to forsake thy sin, do it now. Wait not till to-morrow. Such thou mayst never behold; and if thou shouldst, what security hast thou that thy sin shall be forsaken? Will thy strength be greater? Will sin be more easily overcome? Will God be more gracious? No; reason and conscience, experience and God's Word, bear witness and say No. If, now, with all thy knowledge and opportunities, thou canst delay, art thou not too plainly saying, by the state of thy heart, that thou art resolved to continue in the way of sinners? If the Spirit of God were to say to thee what thy heart silently declares, wouldst thou not be alarmed? Let not thy self-esteem impose upon thine understanding, and pervert the language of thy heart, and the truth which it

inspires. Is not God speaking to thee through thy heart? Does not this still voice tell thee a tale of ruin and death? How long shalt thou strive with the Spirit of Love? Wilt thou be deaf for ever to the silent inspirations of his voice? Will his warnings pass away as a dream of the night? Will his earnest entreaties, his faithful promises, his tender invitations, all the gifts of his love, fall upon thy heart, as the dew of the morning on the flinty rock of the wilderness? Art thou saying in thy soul, "Let me break his bands asunder, and cast away the cords" of his love? Cease to grieve the Spirit of Christ. Walk no longer in the path of destruction. Tarry not in all the plain, but escape to the mountains, lest the wrath of God overtake thee.

But, backslider, if thou wilt both confess and forsake thy sin, thou shalt be restored and have peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Confession of sin will, to a certain extent, on grounds merely natural, give ease to the heart and conscience. Anything which impresses the mind, whether with pleasure or with pain, and which, when expressed either to God or to man, increases the measure of its enjoyments. This is a fact in the social nature of man; and is a source from which flows much of his comfort and joy. Within him dwells a desire to share with those around him his pleasures and his pains; and the very expression of this desire is acompanied with increased satisfaction. Let a man meet with a piece of good fortune, the pleasure which he feels will be greater by making it known to a neighbour or friend. Should some difficulty be overcome, should his prospects be brightened, or his wealth be increased, his enjoyment will receive an addition by expressing it to others. On the other side, it is no less true. The pain which is caused by misfortune, bereavement, or disappointed hope, when expressed to a companion or friend, is in some measure

relieved. How often has the villain, stained with blood, and guilty of the darkest deeds, sought for ease to his troubled heart by confessing his crimes and giving himself up into the hands of justice! How often, too, does the sinner, when simply convicted of sin, by confessing it at the throne of mercy, find a temporary ease to his burdened soul! Often has this relieved the heart on grounds quite natural, deceived the sinner, and made him believe that he had passed from death to life. Thus, thousands pass for converted ones who have never known the saving truth. Thus the soul, instead of resting on the *express word*, is too often taught to rest on *mere feeling*. The path from death to life must not be reversed. The command is not to find peace through confession, but find peace through believing. The peace which flows from mere feeling is deceitful and changing; but the peace which flows from believing is true and constant, filling the heart with joy.

But, backslider, wouldst thou be restored, wouldst thou have pardon and peace, wouldst thou have that blessed calm which passeth all understanding, thou must not only confess and forsake thy sin, but, in addition, rest on the promise of God. Hear, then, the words of Him who is faithful and true. John, the beloved of Jesus, affectionately says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Job also testifies and says, "If any say I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light." Solomon, too, says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them, shall have mercy." The sweet singer of Israel gives his own experience, and says, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according unto the multitude of

thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions; wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. *For I acknowledge my transgression; and my sin is ever before me.*"

In these words, the Spirit of God declares that he who confesses and forsakes his sin shall be forgiven. The promise of God in the language before us is so plain, "that he who runneth may read." No cloud obscures—no doubt hangs over it—no difficult phrase gathers around it; but, like the works of God in nature, it stands forth in its simple and unaffected grandeur, inviting the wanderer, and promising him a peace and a joy which the world cannot bestow. It asks no money, no price, no sacrifice of houses or lands. It asks not the treasures of the deep, nor the riches of the diamond mine. It says—believe, trust, obey; confess and forsake thy sin, and have confidence in the promise of Him who is faithful and true. If, then, thou hast felt the evil of sin, if thou hast known that thou hast confessed and forsaken it, then know as a certainty that all thy sins are forgiven, and that the Good Shepherd of the sheep has restored thy soul. Fear not; he will not be unfaithful to his promise. God is not a man that he should lie. Shall the Judge of all the earth do wrong? No; heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle shall in nowise pass from his promise, till all be fulfilled. How many voices in heaven, voices out of all nations and kindreds and tongues, are now singing the faithfulness of his promise! And how many hearts on earth are glowing with gratitude, and singing the glory of his unchanging promise! And how many in ages to come shall bear witness that his promises are all yea and amen! If so, if heaven and earth and all time can unite their voices and testify that his promise is unfailing and true, why shouldst thou, a wanderer from the

fold, be doubtful or afraid? Have not thousands, nameless thousands, who have forsaken the Sun of Righteousness, confessed and forsaken their sin, and found pardon, peace, and joy? Casting their mite of faith into the treasury of promise, they heard the voice of the loving Saviour saying to them, Be of good cheer, your sins are forgiven you. O, wanderer, if thou hast confessed and forsaken thy sin—yes, forsaken it—he speaks as plainly to thee, and says, Son, daughter, thy sins are forgiven; go in peace, and sin no more.

How blessed is the man whose sins are forgiven, whose soul is restored, whose joy is unknown to the world! His may be no stately edifice, no broad lands, no train of obedient followers. There may be nothing to attract the carnal eye. He may be poor, unnoticed—he may be despised. His path through life may be rough and thorny, with scarcely a flower to soften the ruggedness of the way. How hard, how seemingly hard! Has the Good Shepherd become neglectful? Has a cloud gathered on his brow? Has he ceased to care for his beloved ones? Has time cast a blight over his loving heart? Has the chill of ages cooled the ardour of his love? No, no; years may roll on years till the last wave of time has closed its mission to man; but the deep sympathies of Him whose love was stronger than death remain unchanged. To every forgiven one—to every soul which he has restored—he affectionately says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you." "A woman may forget her sucking-child, and she may cease to have compassion on the son of her womb, but I will not forget thee." "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving-kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant be removed that hath mercy on thee, saith the Lord." The

child of the day, the pardoned, the restored of God, though treading a path rough, rugged, and painful, has a joy that far surpasses the child of the night, how much soever he may be the favourite of fortune and fame. The joy of the one is pure, elevating, filling the mind with peace; that of the other is gross, grovelling, filling the heart with care. The joy of the one makes him superior to the ills of life; that of the other makes him their miserable football. The one has built his house on the rock; the other, on the sand. The one fears not the descending flood; the other trembles at its approach. That is one of God's freemen; this, one of Satan's slaves. The one is led by the Spirit of God; the other, by the Spirit of Evil. The path of the one becomes brighter and brighter, shining more and more unto the perfect day; that of the other, darker and darker, closing in the gloom of the eternal night. To the one, the valley of death has no fears; to the other, it is full of alarm. The one will soon hear the voice of the Good Shepherd saying to him, "Come thou blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for thee from the foundation of the world;" the other, "Depart from me thou cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." How bright, how full of joy, the path of him whose sins are forgiven! How dark, how full of care the path of him whose soul is covered with the leprosy of sin! Miserable man! thou canst have no true, no solid joy. Thou art passing through life with no higher an aim than the brutes that perish, neglecting, corrupting, and destroying all that is God-like in thy soul. How long wilt thou be deaf to the voice of the Saviour, calling thee, and saying, O ruined and lost one! "how often would I have gathered thee as a hen gathereth her brood under her wing, but thou wouldst not!" How long will the multitude of thy sins cry aloud, and say, Away with him, away

with him; crucify him, crucify him! How long will his blood follow thy footsteps, and cry to Heaven for vengeance! How long will the spear of thine iniquities pierce the tender and affectionate breast! How long will his tears, his agonies, and cries, be to thee as the idle wind, or the small dust under thy feet! How long wilt thou listen to his dying prayer, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do," and continue thine ungodly opposition! Was not that a prayer for thee—a prayer stronger than death? Was it not a proof of his deep, unspeakable love for thee? Wanderer of the night! trust him, place thy confidence in him. "Be not afraid, O thou of little faith." "Wherefore dost thou doubt?" Great are thy sins; but greater is thy Saviour. Multitudes, countless multitudes, have confessed and forsaken their sins, and, confiding in him, have found pardon and peace. These may be thine, chief of sinners though thou be. He is willing to save thee now, even now; and is affectionately saying to thee, "Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me." Why then delay?

Will to-morrow's sun soften the path to pardon and peace? Will time, spent in the service of the flesh, awaken conviction, and show thee thy lost condition? Impossible: every hour and day, every month and year that passes over thee, makes the way to Jesus more difficult to tread. Wouldst thou be restored, wouldst thou have pardon and peace, decide for Jesus now, yes, even just now. God is waiting to be gracious, yea, "to-day, if thou wilt hear his voice."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE HEAVENLY GUIDANCE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake."

THOUGH the soul is restored, and finds peace with God, yet, in its path to heaven it requires the leading strings of Him who has given it life. A little child, in its early attempts to walk, is ever ready to stumble and fall. Its tiny feet, though endued with a measure of strength, are unaccustomed to the path; and unless supported and guided by parental love, they would fail to accomplish their end. A mother's heart and a mother's care, like two ministering angels guarding some heavenly treasure, direct and sustain its feeble footsteps. Were it left to itself, many, and perhaps dangerous, would be its falls. The strength which nature gave it, the gift of heaven, designed for its safety and joy, is put under the guidance of a mother's love. Helpless, indeed, would it be without her helping hand and cherishing care. Not otherwise is it with a child of God. It needs his directing power to lead it "in the paths of righteousness." Unaided and alone, it would utterly fail to climb the steep and narrow path leading to the Better Land; and for lack of strength, would faint or fall by the way. As the seed, when sown, requires the aid of the sun and the shower to lead its unseen footsteps towards maturity, so the seed of the truth, when sown in the heart, requires the aid of the Sun of Righteousness, and the outpourings of the Spirit to lead it towards the

Promised Land. When God loosed the fetters of his favoured ones, he did not leave them on the shores of the Red Sea. His wonderful works ceased not, when the pride and power of Egypt were overthrown. The symbol of his presence, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, forsook them not, but guided their steps through the wilderness, and at last conducted them to the Canaan of their hopes and joys. During forty years, he fed, clothed, and protected them, and finally made their land his dwelling-place. So is it with the children of God. When he breaks their bands asunder, and gives them spiritual freedom, he leaves them not by the red fountain of the Saviour's blood. He goes forth with them into the wilderness, supplies their wants, directs their footsteps, strengthens them for their journey, chastens and trains them and makes them to know and to feel the mighty workings of his grace and power. That star which God has dropped on the brow of evening is not left unheeded and alone: it is in the leading strings of Him who gave it all its beauty and brightness. That delicate flower that blooms, and struggles for life on the bosom of the rock, is as much an object of his care as its distant companion which sparkles on the brow of evening. The little songster that warbles its wild and pleasing melody, whether in the moorland or upwards to heaven, sings not unheeded and uncared for by Him who tuned its note and taught it to chant its sweet lullaby. The tenant of the deep, how great or how small soever it may be, is guided through the Great Waters by the bands of his wisdom and power. The winds of heaven, though emblems of liberty, are yet under his rein and guidance, and fail not to accomplish his design, whether of mercy or of desolation. That tidal wave which skims along the deep and dissolves on the sea-shore, in a long, beautiful line of snow, uttering its last break with a

sullen roar, is no less under his directing power, and no less fulfils its errand of love. If these, all these, with numerous, nameless others, are guided and upheld by his wisdom, power, and goodness, can he, from whose brow the brand of the curse has been removed, and who can claim a family relation with the King of Kings, be a solitary exception? Can he, whose soul has stamped upon it anew the image of God—into whom the Spirit of Truth has breathed the breath of the second life, and who has become one of the new race of men, be a stranger to the sustaining, guiding, and fostering care of Him who clothes the lilies of the field in more than robes of royalty? If He unfolds the leaves of the forest, if he paints with the sunbeam the flowers of the field, if he leads forth as a flock the clouds of heaven, and opens a path for the solitary stream, how much more so will he unfold the graces, beautify the life, lead forth as a shepherd the feeble and erring footsteps, and open by his providence and grace the path of him and of all that are His beloved. "Thus saith the Lord, their Redeemer, I am the Lord, their God, which teacheth them to profit, which leadeth them by the way that they should go." "When they pass through the waters, I will be with them; and through the rivers, they will not overflow them; and when they walk through the fire, they shall not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon them." "They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them; for I, that have mercy on them, shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall I guide them." "I will bring the blind by a way that they know not; I will lead them in paths that they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do saith the Lord."

But the paths of righteousness, in which God leads his

children, are often rough, and difficult to tread. This is true; and it has been felt by the people of God to be true in every age. Early, indeed, was the fact verified, that the paths of righteousness are rough, and difficult to tread. Only a few years after the *Fall*, the path of piety was stained with innocent blood, shed by the hand of a brother. This unnatural deed was prophetic, and foretold the persecution and cruel deaths, which were to follow many of those who walked in the heavenly path. The blood of Abel, the first martyr, was a beacon-fire to all the people of God, warning them, that the devil, the world, and the flesh would combine to harass, overcome, and destroy them. His early death by the hand of the murderer, was a fulfilment of God's words, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." How true have been these words in the experience of God's people. "Even unto this present hour," says Paul, "we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place; and labour, working with our own hands; being reviled, we bless: being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscourings of all things unto this day." In another place, he says, "And others had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonments: they were stoned; they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." The beloved apostle spoke truly when he said, "These are they which came out of great tribulations, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in

his temple; and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

But though the paths of righteousness are rough and difficult to tread, and often full of great trouble, yet the believer has much comfort from the fact that he is *led* by the Great Shepherd of the sheep. He who knows that he is guided by perfect wisdom and goodness, and is sensible that he is on his way to a better land, must enjoy a large share of comfort. It was this belief that consoled and cheered the pious Israelite in his strange wanderings through the wilderness. He knew that he was led by God who, in a wonderful manner, had broken his fetters, and set him free, and that he was now on his way to the Promised Land. Wild, and dreary, and dangerous, might the solitude be, through which he had to pass. Hunger and thirst, sickness and toil, bereavement and tears, might be the companions of his path. The tempest or the storm might beat upon him; the sun might smite him by day, or the moon by night; the heat of the desert might oppress, or the cold dews of the evening chill him, still, there was a balm for all his troubles. In the dark night, relieved by no moon nor star, when the thick clouds gathered over the heavens, there, before him, stood the pillar of fire, the symbol of the divine presence, saying to him: "Behold, I send an Angel before thee to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee unto the place which I have prepared. He shall thrust out the enemy before thee; and shall say, destroy them. Thou, then, shalt dwell in safety alone: the fountains of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine: also his heavens

shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O son of Israel! Who is like unto thee, saved by the Lord, who is the shield of thy help, and the sword of thine excellency"? If, then, the pious Israelite, guided by the symbol of divine love, and encouraged by the hope of a rich and beautiful, yet but an earthly home, could, in the midst of trial, find a balm to soothe his sorrows, how much more should the pious follower of the Lamb! Is he not led in the paths of righteousness by the spirit of a milder and more merciful covenant? Is the genius of Grace less comforting than the genius of Law? Is the voice which speaks through the blood of Bulls more consoling than the voice that speaks through the blood of Christ? Is Sinai, girdled with its thunders more comforting to the heart, than Calvary, clothed with mercy and love? Is the shadow more solid than the substance? Is the casket more precious than the gem which it enfolds? Hear, O believer, the voices, the comforting voices, which come from the Sun of Righteousness, and say to thee: "Let not thy heart be troubled. In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for thee. And if I go and prepare a place for thee, I will come again, and receive thee unto myself, that where I am, there thou mayst be also. Peace I leave with thee, my peace I give unto thee; not as the world giveth, give I unto thee. Let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. If thou abide in me, and my words abide in thee, thou shalt ask what thou wilt, and it shall be given unto thee. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved thee. These things have I spoken unto thee, that my joy may remain in thee; and that thy joy may be full. In the world thou shalt have tribulation; but be of good cheer, in me thou shalt have peace. Blessed art thou when men shall revile thee, and persecute thee, and shall say all manner of evil against thee

falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is thy reward in heaven." Mark the experience of the Apostle Paul, supported by such consolations: "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong." "For he hath said, My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength is made perfect in weakness." Believer, have the "paths of righteousness" become to thee, rough and difficult to tread? Do they seem steep and dangerous to ascend? Are they full of enemies, ready to harass or destroy thee? Has poverty, haggard and pale, been thy companion? Have worldly friends forsaken thee? Is their esteem no longer shown? and do they pass thee silently and neglectfully? Are thy temptations many and severe? Is the love of the world gathering over thy heart, and becoming dangerous to thee? Art thou ready to be misled by folly, pride, and ambition? Are thy struggles great for Christ's sake, for righteousness' sake? Know, then, that though thy path be full of trouble, Jesus is with thee, as thy pillar of cloud and fire, conducting thy footsteps with infinite wisdom and love, and leading thee towards "the inheritance, incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." "Behold God is thy salvation:" trust in him, and fear not: "for the Lord *Jehovah* is thy strength and thy song." "Cry out and shout, then, O inhabitant of Zion; for great is the Holy One in the midst of thee."

But the believer is comforted from the fact that he is led not only by the Great Shepherd, but that, by the very troubles which meet him in the paths of righteousness, his character is being formed to enable him to enjoy the blessedness of heaven. In this world, most persons, capable of thought and possessed of prudence, derive much of their comfort from the expectation of some approaching

good. The past has gone for ever, carrying with it the memory of joys and sorrows, and leaving little behind, either to impart pleasure or console the heart. Like the flower, once fair and beautiful, breathing its sweet odours on the soft winds of heaven, and rejoicing in the morning of its days as if it was a thing clothed with immortality, but which decays, withers, dies, and passes away as a shadow or a dream. The present, cold and short-lived, unclothed with association, and unadorned by fancy, stands forth with forbidding air and awakens but little interest or emotion. Different, however, is it with the future. Dark, mysterious, and unknown, it lies before us like a vast sea, silent and endless, and as yet undisturbed by the events of time. On the bosom of that future repose our hopes and our fears, our expectations of fortune or of misfortune, of pleasure or of pain. Whatever, therefore, gives us the hope of future happiness must be a source of comfort, sweetening the moments which fly. This is felt in every condition of life, whether by the young or the old, the rich or the poor, the ignorant or the learned, the virtuous or the vile. The sons of toil feel that though their labours are exhausting, wearisome, and sickening, they are making provision for a future day, and are cheered by the prospect which lies before them. The scholar, too, shuts himself up in the quietude of his study, pores over the page of ancient lore, enriches his mind with the wisdom of ages, and spends laborious days and nights in search of the true, the good, and the beautiful, until his cheek becomes pale over the midnight lamp. He knows that the efforts which he is now making, how great soever they may be, are adding to his intelligence, and preparing him for future usefulness, elevation, and happiness in the world. Are not such prospects calculated to inspire his heart, and to fill him with comfort and joy?

The path which he climbs may be steep and laborious; but it is the very path which leads to honour and happiness. Does not the husbandman, too, cultivate his fields, sow his seed, bear heat and cold and weariness, and expose himself to the changes of weather with the hope of being rewarded by an abundant harvest? Is not such a hope encouraging? Does it not smooth the rugged path of toil? Does it not soothe and satisfy the heart? Is it not a source of comfort amidst all his labours? But the very troubles or trials in the paths of righteousness give the believer the hope of happiness, as they form the character for the enjoyment of heaven. Were there no cross, there could be no crown. Were there no trial, there could be no virtue, no piety; and, therefore, there could be no heavenly enjoyment. The pleasures of the Upper Sanctuary consist in the exercise of virtue and piety, of all the graces of the Christian life. There, vice would be miserable, and would find no fellowship, no rest for the sole of its foot. If, then, the tradesman, the scholar, and the husbandman are comforted in their toils by the hope of an earthly good, how much more ought the believer to be comforted in his trials by the hope of a heavenly good! Between these, there is no equality. The earthly often disappoints; the heavenly, never. The one is a meteor which flashes for a moment, and is gone for ever; the other, a light which knows no change, and which shines through ceaseless ages. With such a hope, a hope so great, so heavenly, so unchanging, ought not the believer, while climbing the steep paths of righteousness, to be full of comfort, yea, to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory? Every step which he advances, every difficulty which he overcomes is forming his character for heaven, and fitting him to converse with the great, the good, and the holy, and

enabling him to enjoy those pleasures prepared for them who love God.

When God leads his children in the paths of righteousness he leads them by his word. In carrying out his designs, the Ruler of all things generally makes use of means. These appear in nature, in providence, in grace. The little flower, clothed in its summer robes, and scented with a sweet odour, as if some angel had breathed upon it and filled it with the sweetness of the Better Land, did not thus drop from the hand of God. Means were employed to complete its grace and to give it all its attractive power. Did not the sunbeam, in the hand of the Spirit of God, paint and beautify it with the finest and fairest hues? Was it not nursed by the earth, and fed with the rain and dews of heaven? and did not the pure breezes give to it health and strength? These are handmarks, taught by the wisdom of God, to adorn and to bring to maturity the little citizen of the garden. But means are not confined to the flower; they are felt and seen through all nature. The tides which rush from shore to shore follow the silver footsteps of the moon. The seasons that change and roll are not without their ruling power. They would have no name, no being, no memorial, if separated from the Sun. Under his smile they live, and breathe, and rejoice. So is it with the believer. The Word of God is the means by which he is led in the paths of righteousness. It lightens his path, guides his conscience, subdues his corruption, and strengthens him in the inner man. There is a power, a divinity, a heavenly influence in the Word, which casts down the proud thought, checks the guilty desire, and restrains the evil passions. It is the channel through which the power of God flows into the heart, sanctifying its emotions, expanding its graces, and filling it with peace, hope, love, and joy. O

blessed Word, co-eternal with the Father, how often hast thou been to the wounded heart as the balm of Gilead! How often hast thou soothed the sorrows of the downcast soul, and dispersed the cloud that hung over it! How often hast thou inspired it with a courage which death itself could not appal! How often hast thou made the believer rejoice, yea, triumph, when the fires of persecution were gathering over him! Under thy gracious smile, Paul counted all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. "Blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord; and who meditates on his word day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."

But though God leads his children in the paths of righteousness by means of his Word, he requires them to exercise the powers of their minds on that Word. The believer, in his journey to heaven, must not imagine that he is to make no effort. If there is ought in this life which requires care, and courage, and energy, and watchfulness, it is the heart of the believer in his progress to heaven. No traveller, passing through an enemy's country, was ever exposed to so many dangers, or did require so much caution, firmness, and decision, as he does, who is walking in the paths of righteousness. Numerous, indeed, are his foes. Within is corruption; without, the enticements of vice. On every side he is beset with enemies—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. He "wrestles" not only "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." If so, how necessary is it to "take the armour of God," to have

"the loins girt about with the truth," "the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel," to take "the sword of the Spirit," and have on the "breast-plate of righteousness"! These heavenly arms, and the strength requisite to wield them, are not of man, but of God. They come from his heart through his blessed Word, which is the armoury and fortress of the believer's power. Separated from this Word, like Samson shorn of his locks, he becomes weak as any other man, and finds himself the football of sin, and the sport of the adversary.

If so, how important is it to the believer who is walking in the paths of righteousness, to study diligently and prayerfully the blessed truths of God's Word, and to treasure in his memory and heart their beauty and life-giving power! For this purpose was it given, that the followers of the Lamb might exert their powers, and judge, and know, and believe what is the perfect will of God, and, feeling the full force of the Spirit's teaching, be led in the paths of righteousness. It is not enough to read, but it is necessary to read with the understanding and the heart, and to keep much before the inner man the pure truths of the Saviour. Many, perhaps too many, professing the faith, read passage after passage, chapter after chapter, brimful of God's love, with as little thought, as little feeling, as a mere schoolboy, and seem to treat the Word as if it were a charm which, if once upon the lip, would, in their path towards heaven, be a safeguard of the life. As well might we expect that, by touching the lip or the palate with the bread which perishes, the body would be nourished, strengthened, and prepared for the labours of the day. Bread, that it may strengthen, must be eaten and digested, otherwise it will be of no service. Such is a condition that God and nature require, and which man must obey, would he sustain his bodily powers. Living at vari-

ance with it, he becomes feeble, fades, and dies. Is it less true in grace as regards the believer? Is not the truth as it is in Christ the bread which sustains the soul? Are his words not spirit, nay, are they not life? Do they not give strength, inward strength? Do they not help the believer to walk in the way of the good, the wise, and the holy? True; but he must obey the heavenly condition, would he sustain the energies of his soul. The bread of the higher life must be the subject of much earnest and prayerful thought, till its sweetness, beauty, power, and importance gradually flow into the heart. The pure and perfect Word, when thus received, will not fail to raise what is low, strengthen what is weak, and enlighten what is dark, leading the believer in the paths of righteousness, and filling him with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." God's thoughts, God's love, dwelling in the memory and occupying the heart, must leaven the inner man, changing it into the Divine likeness. If evil thoughts, whether suggested by the devil, the world, or the flesh, root out the seeds of virtue—corrupt, degrade, and destroy whatever is fair and beautiful in man, bringing him into the likeness of the Evil One—on the other hand, must not the knowledge of the goodness, greatness, and holiness of God, living in the mind and heart, break the power of sin, purify the soul, and turn all into his own blessed image? "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold; yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward."

But though the truth should appear in its beauty, and communicate its power to the heart, the believer must not rest satisfied with such a discovery. He is not to think that his efforts are come to a close. It is far otherwise. The increase of light makes the paths of duty more numerous, and widens the sphere of responsibility. Inward light is the raw material of Christian action, and is to be woven into the beautiful robes which clothe the inner man. When, therefore, the follower of the Lamb has stepped into the store-house of faith, and taken from it some of its fair materials, he ought to know that his work begins. Were he to proceed no further, he would be hiding his Lord's goods, burying them in the earth, and would be occupying the guilty position of the wicked and slothful servant whom his lord denounced, saying, "Take, therefore, the talent from him, and give it unto him who hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath, it shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The believer when he confines the knowledge of God's Word to his own mind, and rejects the guidance of its heavenly aid, is like a man walking at midnight on the edge of a precipice, who having a lantern which can show him the perils of his path, casts the lap of his garment over it, and, heedless of danger, walks in the darkness. He who looks into the treasury of faith, and finds some of its precious gems, but treats them with cold neglect, hardens his heart, quenches the Spirit, and exposes himself to the judgments of God. Woe to him that is deaf to the still small voice of conscience, when enlightened by the teachings of the Spirit. With open eyes he is hastening to the edge of a fearful precipice with its deep, dark, angry

waters beneath ready to engulf him. Mad suicide, pause ere thou art lost forever! A few steps more will close thine ungodly race, and fix thy doom, when the contrite tear and the repentant sigh will be in vain. Stop, think, reflect. Behold that cloud of death which hangs over the abyss of despair! Hear its muttering thunders, mingled with the wail of agony, the doleful voices of the lost, the fallen, the miserable! Advance, if thou darest. All hell is before thee. Would'st thou add thy groans to that wild murmur of agony? Would'st thou drop into the folds of the worm which knows no pity, which calls death her elder brother? Art thou prepared to relinquish for ever the tender mercies of God, and become the image of supreme misery? Would'st thou be the companion of all that is opposed to God? Would the fellowship of the liar, the drunkard, and the murderer, the hard-hearted, the whoremonger, and the blasphemer, nay, the devil and his angels, be to thy heart a source of satisfaction and joy? How long wilt thou despise the Saviour, thy faithful and dearest friend, who, as thou art hurrying to destruction, still follows thee, still loves thee, and is dropping into thy footsteps the tear of compassion! How long wilt thou harden thy heart, and be deaf to his entreating voice, and resist the leadings of his Spirit, anxious to guide thee in the paths of righteousness! Why be misled by thine evil genius, and be lost, lost forever? Wanderer of the night, let the light that is in thee, and which struggles to be free, be thy pillar of fire. Follow its guiding light, however rough and wild the path, however steep and difficult the ascent, may be. It will lead thee to the home of the good, the pure, and the holy, to a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

The Sweet Singer of Israel being thus restored and led in the paths of righteousness, assigns, at the close of the

verse, the reason that God had so dealt with him, affirming that it was "for His name's sake." How important an example! Every believer should be prepared to give a reason from God's Word, of his faith, hope, love, and joy. Many professing to be on their way to heaven, when asked the ground of their peace with God, or their hopes of eternal life, can give no satisfactory reply. A dream, a vision of the night, some event which has occurred, some thought or feeling which has suddenly arisen in the mind, or the fact that the church or the chapel has been honoured by the strictest attendance, and its ordinances observed, or that the Sabbath has been reverenced and the moral law kept, is the reason, perhaps the only reason, which many can assign as the ground of their peace with God, and their hope of a happy immortality. This way of easing the conscience and comforting the heart is honourable neither to God nor his Word. Is it not an appeal to superstition, an appeal to self-righteousness? Is it not making ignorance and pride the judge of their spiritual state? How foolish, how ungodly, to build on such a foundation! Can it stand when the pale hand of disease is on thy brow, when the cold damps of death foretell life's closing scene, or when the spirit unclothed passes into the presence of its Almighty Judge? Ah, no! impossible. That which resists the temptations of the world, the enticements of avarice, the seductions of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; that which bears with patience the ills of life, its privations and cares, its losses and crosses, its persecutions and sneers; that which stands against the corruptions of time and the wear of eternity, is the foundation on which the child of God builds his peace, his hope, his joy. The great man of the East, great for his riches, great for his piety, when the blast of adversity had laid him low, and made him like a miserable

wreck on the seashore, was still greater even in his misfortunes. There was something which the enemy could not destroy. His numerous flocks and herds might become the prey of the spoiler; his beloved children might no longer rejoice in his smile; but there was something which the Sabean and Chaldean could not take away—nay, something which neither the storms of the desert nor the fires of heaven could destroy. That was the Rock on which he stood, the Rock of Ages, immoveable, unchangeable. Hear him, thou that dreamest the dream of thy salvation; listen to his words, thou that buildest the Babel of thine own righteousness:—"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another: though my reins be consumed within me." The Chief Corner-stone on which he built his peace and hope, was the Redeemer. This was his sure Anchor in the storm. With respect to him, death had no sting; the grave, no victory. The worm might indeed destroy his body, "yet in his flesh would he see God."

But the man of Uz, who leaned on the unchangeable, is not a solitary instance. The faith and hope of the righteous, who have lived through all ages, rested on the same foundation. No sooner was the image of God effaced by the fall, than a voice was heard from heaven, saying, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The promised Messiah, the seed of the woman, was the Corner-stone on which the ancient saint founded his peace with God and his hopes of future bliss. The old foundation of perfect obedience had crumbled

away. A new and a better one was laid in the heart of God, one which neither the powers of darkness nor the devices of men could destroy. On this Rock, "elect and precious," stood the good and the holy, who feared not when "the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew." It was the Rock of Ages, the Rock which the Father of the Faithful, with far-seeing eye, beheld, as he looked through the mist of years, and trusting in it, rejoiced. Early did the Hebrew perceive it through the lamb whose blood stained the lintels and posts of his door. Every sacrifice was indeed a light, guiding the eye of the worshipper to the Lamb of God, as the ground of his peace and joy. Every type, whether of persons or of things that pointed to Him, described in its own particular way some part of his blessed character. The brazen serpent on the pole has not yet lost its cheering voice. It tells the dying that there is a Saviour who can give life, life everlasting. Neither is the ark of Noah, nor the cities of refuge, less comforting to the guilty soul. Is there approaching wrath? Within the pale of the heavenly Ark, there is safety to him that is ready to perish. Is the avenger of blood on the trail of his intended victim? There is a Refuge to which he can flee, and be safe for ever. Is the path to the heavenly Canaan dark, doubtful, or difficult to discover? Jesus is the Pillar of fire, dispersing the darkness, comforting the heart, being the Leader of the way. Is there a dry, parched wilderness, through which it is necessary to pass? Jesus is the Rock of the desert, pouring forth its living water, quenching the thirst, and refreshing the faint and weary soul. Hear the pious son of Amoz, as with heavenly vision he looks through distant ages and contemplates the hope of Israel: "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; and he that believeth

shall not make haste." But to those who believe not "He shall be a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, for a gin and for a snare;" "and many shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken." "And in that day, there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people: to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious." "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever." How many voices come from the shadows of the Jew, telling of Him who was their spirit and their life! How many voices, taught by inspiration, and coming through far distant time, speak of Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life." Patriarch and prophet and holy type combine, bearing witness of Him who is the foundation of all pardon, and peace, and righteousness. With such a cloud of witnesses, so varied in form, so clear in statement, so conclusive in testimony, let the unbeliever lay aside his doubts, the dreamer, his dream of salvation, and the proud pharisee, his deeds of righteousness. Let there be one name, one rock, one reason, on which to stand, in which to trust and rejoice, for pardon, peace, and eternal life. That name, that rock, that reason is Christ; for there is no other name given under heaven amongst men by which we can be saved, except that of the Lord Jesus. "I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no Saviour."

But David, when he says, "He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness," assigns, at the

close of the verse, the reason why God so dealt with him, and informs us that it was "*for his name's sake.*" It was not on account of his high station, his imperial power, or his devotion to the tabernacle. Neither was it for his confession of sin, his tears of repentance, nor his firm determination to serve God. No, these had no virtue, no power in themselves, to merit the divine favour. Rank, and riches, and contrite sighs, and good intentions, can neither rescue a soul from death, nor give it pardon and peace. There was something higher and holier than these in which he trusted as the ground of restoration and of divine guidance in the paths of righteousness. That ground was "*His name's sake,*" even God's mercy and goodness in Christ. Start not, reader, at this, nor think it strange that Jesus was the ground of God's mercy and goodness to David, his backsliding servant. Think you that the Sweet Singer of Israel saw no farther, trusted no farther, than the blood of goats and bulls and heifers, or that his faith lay within the pale of Jewish ceremony? Did the blood which oozed from the sacrifice contain some hidden virtue that had power with Heaven? Had the smoke of the burning victim, as it ascended on high, something mysterious in itself, which could mightily prevail with God? Was there aught in the life of a brute, aught in the sacred gift, aught in the thanksgiving offering, which deserved the mercy and goodness of God? Ah, no! Listen to the hero of Tarsus who was deeply skilled in Jewish lore, and who maintains that "the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins. But

in those sacrifices, there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." These were a "shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me." Had the law of ceremony been in itself an independent system, capable of giving pardon, and peace, and the hope of future bliss, the great work of Christ, his important mission to man, would have been only a new method of saving sinners. But if the rites of the Jew had a hidden virtue, a secret power, capable of prevailing with God, and of giving salvation to men, what need of the sufferings and death, the resurrection and intercession of Christ? Has God given two distinct grounds of salvation, one for the Jew, another for the Gentile? Are there two separate paths to heaven, one through Moses, another through Christ? Is there the way of the law and the way of grace? Are there two names given under heaven by which sinners can be saved? No, impossible, it cannot be. The law was but the shadow of things to come, a dim outline of the gospel. "The law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ;" and Moses, but the forerunner, the pioneer of the Lord Jesus. When, therefore, the Psalmist experienced the mercy and goodness of God in "restoring his soul," and leading him "in the paths of righteousness," he knew, he well knew, that the ground of his bliss was no other than the long expected Messiah, of whom he speaks again and again in his beautiful songs of Zion.

How important is it, then, to keep in constant remembrance the precious truth, that Jesus is the foundation of [illegible]y and goodness to man! This truth, it may be, [illegible]ently kept before the mind, even by him who

professes to believe. Often, perhaps too often, God is approached simply as he is in himself, and asked for blessings on the ground of his own perfections. Such an act of devotion is pure deism. It puts Christ out of view, and deals directly with God. This is not Christianity. God is approachable only through the Mediator, and he cannot receive as acceptable any form of worship, or service, or obedience, which is not grounded on Christ. Without such a foundation, in vain would the saint draw near to the Most High, or do those things which are pleasing in his sight. "No man," says Jesus, can come unto the Father but by me." In all his movements towards the better land, the believer must keep constantly in view the blessed Jesus, as the great and only means through which all strength, all peace, all joy, all progress in righteousness flow.

But Jesus is the channel not only of spiritual but also of temporal blessings. This consideration does not so often occur to the mind, being comparatively less the subject of thought. In thinking of Christ, the great object of his mission, the salvation of sinners, readily engages the attention, and sweetens the thoughts to things spiritual and eternal. But the mercy and goodness of God through his Beloved, as regards the temporal, though seldom the subject of sermon or lecture, is a topic far from being void of interest, importance, or use. Whatever elevates the thoughts, fills the heart with gratitude, and draws forth the voice of adoration and praise, must be a matter which deserves some attentive regard. If, by contemplating the temporal, and, with the eye of faith, beholding the blessed Channel through which all earthly good flows, the heart is warmed with a higher and holier love, surely it becomes a part of Christian duty to observe, in some degree, those beautiful and wonderful views of God's goodness and mercy which appear in

the natural world. This, though not dealing directly with the heavenly, is calculated to awaken within us a greater love to God, and an increased sense of the precious work of Christ. Is not the temporal a pathway to the spiritual? Is it not here that our first impressions and ideas of goodness and mercy are received? Does not the helpless infant imbibe these while it suckles the breast of its affectionate mother? Does not her constant and undying love foster and expand them? Is not the measure of goodness and mercy felt by the believer in relation to God the aggregate of these sentiments as awakened by the temporal? Will not, therefore, a more extended survey of the earthly deepen his impressions, and give him higher and holier views of the love of God and of the glorious mission of Christ? Will not the believer who has an extensive view of God's works, and who has on his mind a lively impression of his wisdom, power, and goodness, have more exalted sentiments of God and the Saviour, than the Christian whose knowledge is confined almost to the gospel? Of this there cannot be a doubt. Every child of God who contemplates the goodness of God, whether in creation or in providence, and believes that all this display of love comes to him through the work of Christ, must have deeper impressions of the preciousness of Christ than he has whose attention is confined to the gospel. Everywhere he discovers the goodness and mercy of God through Christ. He beholds them in the approach of Spring, in the beauty of Summer, in the abundance of Autumn, and amidst the storms of Winter. He feels them in the necessaries of life, in its comforts, in the peace and bliss of his home, in the health and strength which he enjoys. He looks back into his past life, and sees them in deliverance from danger, in the removal of disease, and in the sweet return of health. He feels them

in the tender friend who has helped him in the dark hour, who has soothed his sorrows, disappointed his fears, and revived his languishing hopes. He beholds them in the measure of his prosperity, in the competence which he enjoys, in all the pleasing socialities of civilised life. Contemplating all this display of goodness and mercy through the Beloved, he feels his heart overflow with gratitude to Him who loved and who gave Himself for him, and, in the warmth of his affections, he can adopt the language and spirit of that beautiful hymn, and say,—

When all thy mercies, O, my God!
  My rising soul surveys,
Transported with the view, I'm lost
  In wonder, love, and praise.
O how shall words, with equal warmth,
  The gratitude declare
That glows within my ravished heart!
  But thou canst read it there.

Thy Providence my life sustained,
  And all my wants redressed,
When in the silent womb I lay,
  And hung upon the breast.
To all my weak complaints and cries
  Thy mercy lent an ear,
Ere yet my feeble thoughts had learned
  To form themselves in prayer.

Unnumbered comforts to my soul,
  Thy tender care bestowed;
Before my infant heart conceived
  From whom those comforts flowed.
When in the slippery paths of youth
  With heedless steps I ran,
Thine arm, unseen, conveyed me safe,
  And led me up to man.

Through hidden dangers, toils, and deaths,
  It gently cleared my way,
And through the pleasing snares of vice,
  More to be feared than they.
When worn with sickness, oft hast Thou
  With health renewed my face;
And, when in sins and sorrows sunk,
  Revived my soul with grace.

Thy bounteous hand with worldly bliss
  Has made my cup run o'er,
And, in a kind and faithful friend,
  Hath doubled all my store.
Ten thousand, thousand, precious gifts
  My daily thanks employ;
Nor is the least a cheerful heart,
  That tastes these gifts with joy.

Through every period of my life
  Thy goodness I'll proclaim;
And after death, in distant worlds,
  Resume the glorious theme.
When nature fails, and day and night
  Divide thy works no more,
My ever grateful heart, O Lord,
  Thy mercy shall adore.

Through all eternity to Thee
  A joyful song I'll raise;
For, oh! eternity's too short
  To utter all thy praise.

CHAPTER V.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE PROVIDENTIAL CARE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD WHEN EXPOSED TO ENEMIES.

"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."

GOD'S providential care extends to all his creatures. This is what might be expected. If the Creator saw it fit to call millions of beings into existence, doubtless he saw it fit to sustain them. To suppose the contrary, that he created them, having fashioned them with so much wisdom, and adorned them with so much beauty, and then abandoned them, would be at variance with his character; his love, his wisdom, and creative power, would be inconsistent with themselves. The same love, the same wisdom, the same power, which gave them form and intelligence, and endowed them with the faculties of enjoyment, must, in accordance with their nature, sustain and foster them. Would it be wise, or good, or Godlike, to call beings into existence and to make no provision for their wants? No, certainly; it would be folly instead of wisdom, evil instead of good, weakness instead of power. Does the painter, the architect, or the poet, cease to take an interest in the works of his genius, and to use his efforts to preserve them? Does the mother forget the child which clings to her breast, or smiles upon her knee? Will the father neglect his children, and see them die for lack of food? Can God, then, whose love, and wisdom, and power are infinite, eternal, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, cease to exercise his tender care over his creatures, the offspring of his

goodness? No; such a thought casts a dark cloud over his perfections, and lowers his character of love beneath that of the creature. On the contrary, all things around us bespeak his constant care and overflowing love. We feel his goodness in the sunbeam which warms us, and which disperses the shadows of night. We behold it in the rains and dews of heaven, which enrich the soil and nourish the fruits of the earth. We see his tender care in providing for the meanest of his creatures. The fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and every living creature that creeps on the earth, have suitable provision made for them by his bountiful providence. Even the humblest flower that blooms in the wilderness, and "wastes its sweetness on the desert air," is not forgotten, but is cherished and preserved by his providential care. "Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." "Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them." How much more man, the head of creation, endowed with powers a little lower than the angels, created after the image of God, and born for immortality!

But while the providential care of God extends to all his creatures, it is specially shown to the faithful in Christ. This is what might be expected from the character of God. If he by his grace provides for the spiritual wants of his people, he will not fail to provide for their temporal wants. The character of God is perfect and consistent with itself. Unlike man, he is not at one time profuse, and at another sparing in his gifts. His goodness is neither governed by humour nor restrained by selfishness. If his goodness, then, is so abundant to the souls of the justified as to enrich them

with a peace and a joy which the world does not know, will he ever fail to supply them with the meaner blessings of food and raiment? The same spirit, the same heart of love which breathed into the dead soul that life which will ever cause it to rejoice, shall not neglect the temple of the body which enshrines the holy worshipper. Sooner by far would the mother forget her first-born, even her only and well-beloved son. She may forget; but he shall not forget. "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed, but my word shall not depart, neither shall the covenant be removed that hath mercy on thee, saith the Lord." Faithful to his word is the Giver of all good. When he promises, he will assuredly fulfil; and when he threatens, he will as certainly punish. How true, how very true, were the promises and threatenings of God to his people in the wilderness! Often did they step aside from the command, and as often were they visited by judgment. Fearful, indeed, were the outpourings of wrath. God did not leave himself without a witness that he might show to all generations his hatred of sin. The flying serpent, the wasting pestilence, the wearisome years spent in the wilderness, are striking memorials of divine judgment falling on Israel on account of their sin. But how wonderful was his care in providing for their bodily wants during their long sojourn in the desert! There the plough knew not the furrow, nor the seed the hand of the sower. To the wanderers the vine, the fig-tree, the olive, and the fragrant pomegranate, were strangers. Neither was it a land of wheat and barley and the honeycomb. There no field, enriched and waving gracefully in its robe of yellow grain, greeted the eye of the lonely pilgrim, and caused his heart to rejoice. There the song from the wine-press was unheard, and the footsteps of the ox knew not the threshing-floor. Yet amidst all this barren-

ness, this lack of nature's bounties, God did not leave them to perish. He remembered his people Israel, and prepared a table for them in the wilderness. The sweet manna, the heavenly bread made by the hand of God, ripened neither by the sunshine nor the shower, fell at the feet of the wandering millions. Neither was there wanting the flesh of the savoury quail. And though in a dry, parched land, and exposed to numerous foes, the chosen of God quenched their thirst at the cooling streams which divinely flowed from the rock in Horeb. And during the long years of their pilgrimage their garments felt not the wearing, wasting power of time, but were as the robes of angels, free from the influence of change. The eye of God was there in the desert as well as in the great city; and his goodness and care are shown to the lowly flower which blooms in obscurity, as well as to the ancient oak that has attracted the gaze and admiration of many generations. Under the guidance and care of the Great Shepherd, the Israelite could say, "Thou preparest a table before me in presence of mine enemies."

But the twelve tribes in the wilderness, are not the only examples of God's special care in supplying the wants of his people, when exposed to enemies. These might be sufficient to show forth the glory of his wonderful love, and to establish the faith of the righteous in his providential goodness. They, indeed, stand forth to the eye, as if written with a pen of fire, and serve as instruction in every coming age. More than thirty centuries have passed over them, and have neither dimmed their brightness, no weakened their power. Like the stars of heaven, the pr videnced of the desert are as fresh and beautiful to the eye faith, as when they first came from the hand of God.

But there are other examples which shed their light on

path of the pilgrim. The Good Shepherd knows the darkness which hangs over the way; and he gives light upon light, here a little and there a little, to guide the footsteps of the faithful towards the Better Land. Lift up the eye of faith, and look back through the mist of years. Far in the distance of time, appears a form, grave, thoughtful, stern, charged with a command from God. Onwards to the gay city of Samaria, the prophet of the Lord pursues his way, and enters the proud capital, filled with the worshippers of Baal. Under the wings of the Almighty, he fears not to deliver the message of wrath to the idolatrous king, saying unto him, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word." A few short months glide away, and the word of the Lord, spoken by the Tishbite, grows into a dread reality. No longer are the hills and the valleys clothed in their robes of green, but are desolate, barren and bare. Neither is the husbandman seen to enter the vineyard, to prune the vine, nor to gather up the luscious grape. The tree of the forest looks dark and desolate, as if smitten by the hand of judgment. The sun comes forth as he was wont to do; but he carries in his bosom no refreshing cloud, neither does he beautify the fields with his spangles of dew. The air is hot and fiery, and Samaria glows as an oven. The voice of the grasshopper is still; and the melody of the grove delights not the ear. Famine, gaunt and terrible, stalks over the land, withering all with its poisonous breath, and filling the homes of the multitude, with tears and lamentations, misery and death.

But where is the Tishbite, the supposed author of all this calamity? Is he in the city, suffering the pangs of hunger? Is he in the palace, partaking of its luxurious fare? No: not there: Samaria is the hotbed of his enemies. Far

away on the banks of the Cherith, under the shield of heaven, the fugitive prophet lies concealed. He is safe; for the shadows of God's secrecy are gathered around him. In vain does the royal persecutor rage and threaten to take vengeance. In vain does he search all lands. Neither can the wisdom of his gods, the sorceries of the priests, nor the dreamer of dreams, discover the hiding place of Elijah. They had eyes, but they could not see; ears, but they could not hear. The Lord had smitten them with blindness of mind. But while famine rages, carrying into every home desolation and war, is the prophet of the Lord left to perish? No: God prepares a table for him in the midst of his enemies. Two birds of prey, moved by divine providence, supply his wants, bringing him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. Instead of the intoxicating draught, the pure simple waters of the Cherith quench his thirst, and serve as his only beverage. The Lord knew that they were better for him than all the wine cellars in the world. The cooling stream neither dethrones his reason, fosters disease, shortens his years, nor exposes him to folly and crime. A few months glide away, and the waters of the Cherith forget to flow. The channel of the humble stream becomes dry. Has the Lord forgotten his servant, that he has dried up the fountains of the brook? Has the resources of his providence become exhausted? Must the prophet now die—die the death of a martyr, withering, unseen, as the solitary flower of the desert? No: it is far otherwise. The failing stream, as it gradually wastes away, and grows into a silver thread, neither awakens his fears, nor shakes his confidence in the providence of God. He has seen his goodness, greatness, faithfulness; and he knows that the Master whom he serves will not forsake him in

the hour of trial. The dry channel of the Cherith, over which his accustomed beverage was wont to flow, warns him of his departure, and is a token of another resting-place. "Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there; behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee." Obedient to the voice of Heaven, fearless of danger, and full of confidence in divine care, he leaves his hiding place, and braves the perils of his journey. In safety, he arrives at the gate of Sarepta, the city of Zidon, the headquarters of Baal. There the widow, a gentle woman, a worshipper of the gods, presents herself, pale, haggard, and hungry, grasping a few sticks to bake her last morsel of bread. A handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, were all the provisions which her pantry contained. These fragments of her store, being consumed, there appeared to her and her beloved boy, her only son, no prospect but starvation and death. To the eye of man's wisdom, the home of this miserable pair seems no fit lodging to the man of God. Better to have lived by the Cherith and been fed by the ravens; better to have sought out the little pools which lay concealed in the dry channel, or searched for some secret spring which oozed from the mountain's side. But God seeth not as man seeth. The eye of the earthly beholds the outside; that of the heavenly, the inside of things. The wisdom of man scarcely knows the result of the hour that flies; the wisdom of God, that of all coming ages. In the abode of the widow, in this home of poverty, Elijah finds a place of refuge. While the land mourns over the desolation, and looks with an agony of desire for some coming shower; while the priest of Baal stands by the altar, plies his dark arts, and entreats his favourite god to send the rain and the dew, the prophet is not only safe from the vengeance of his enemies, but also

safe from the power of the famine. In Sarepta of the the Gentiles, in this new asylum, he terminates his wild life, and is no more the companion of the fowls of the air, nor the beasts of the field. The ravens forget their mission of mercy, bringing no longer bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. Their strange ministry is not now required. God prepares for him another table, restores him to his kind, and enables him to enjoy the socialities of private life. A more mysterious providence now manifests itself, excluding all earthly agency, and revealing the immediate power of God. The cruse of oil, like the perennial spring, fails not to give a plentiful supply; and though no hand is seen to fill the treasury, it continues to pour forth its abundance. Nor is it otherwise with the handful of meal. From the barrel containing the little store, a sufficiency is found, perhaps only a daily sufficiency. As the manna, the bread of heaven, gathered in the wilderness, was dealt out in daily supplies, so may it have been with the bread and the oil of Sarepta. There, in that city of Zidon, in the abode of the widow and her son, lived the prophet, a refugee from his country, but a recipient of Divine care. The tempest may rage, desolation may sweep over the land, the wail of woe may be heard in the cities, and the voice of anguish and terror may be loud in the palace, but thou art safe, Elijah. He that is for thee is greater than they who are against thee. The heathen may rage, and the people imagine a vain thing; the kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel, against thee; but thou art secure in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty. Is he not thy Refuge, thy Fortress, and thy God, in whom is thy trust? Surely, he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the

noisome pestilence. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand may fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. The blood of the prophet may be on the sword of Jezebel, but it cries to Heaven for vengeance on the head of the guilty. Fear not, thou man of God, the banner of the Lord shall yet prevail and be glorious. The same providential care which has accompanied thy footsteps feeds and guards a hundred prophets in the bosom of the rock, and seven thousand in Israel who have never sworn allegiance at the altar of Baal. The rage of the palace may call its gods to witness that ere the setting of the morrow's sun, the sword of the destroyer shall be red with thy blood, and close thine earthly career. But be not dismayed. Even under the shade of the juniper, the angel of God will be thy shield, will supply thy wants, and be thy faithful friend.

But the special care of God in regard to his people in the midst of enemies, is, for the most part, unaccompanied with miracles. More frequently he works by second causes, by human agencies. In both ways he has magnified his power, and shown his glory. The prophets, the apostles, and persecuted of all ages, have more or less experienced his goodness, mercy, and care, in supplying their bodily wants in the hour of trial. Paul, great in missionary enterprise, travelled for many years through distant lands, and though much exposed to peril and want, was yet sustained by the good providence of God. Serving a faithful Master, and trusting in his goodness, he felt satisfied that the necessaries of life could not fail. Boldly, therefore, did he turn his face towards the Gentile world; and, as if he had been provided

with the most ample means of missionary toil, travelled through remote countries preaching the gospel. So was it with many of his brethren. Having confidence in God, they followed the path of duty, and found they were not deceived. Very remarkably was this fact verified in the experience of the early preachers. "Go your ways," said Jesus, "behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves. Carry neither purse nor scrip, nor shoes; and salute no man by the way." On another occasion, when he sent his little band to preach the kingdom of God, "he said unto them, Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money, neither have two coats a-piece." Without missionary funds, without the donations of the rich, or the patronage of the great—in short, without any perceptible means of support, these heralds of the truth, went forth in their poverty, preached the gospel of the kingdom, and were sustained by the special care of God. Such was the power of Divine wisdom and goodness, that the wolf became the lamb's provider, being changed into a gracious friend. The Spirit of God touched the heart of the enemy, turned the current of his affections, and caused him to bow at his footstool. Having completed their missionary tour, these early heralds of the Cross returned to their blessed Master, and were full of faith and joy. How truly could they say, "Thou hast prepared a table before us in the presence of our enemies." The Lord has been our keeper; the Lord has been our shade upon our right hand. He has preserved us from all evil, and been with us in our going out and our coming in. Bless the Lord, O our souls; and all that is within us, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all his benefits, who has satisfied our mouths with good things.

But the special care of God, in supplying the wants of his people, when exposed to enemies, has not been confined

to the saints of the Old Testament, or to those of the New. The Great Shepherd is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He has no step-children. One generation of his saints is as dear to Him as another. If he has shown such special care in providing for his people under the Old, will he show less care for them under the New, Dispensation? Is the Old more generous than the New? Is there more of God in Sinai than in Calvary? Are the thunders of the mountain sweeter to the ear than the voices of the Cross? Can the blood of bulls be compared to the blood of Jesus? The one is but the shadow, the other is the substance. The former is but the dawn, the latter is the day. It may, therefore, be concluded that the genius of the New Covenant, instead of limiting, extends the special providence of God towards his people. If the love of God has greatly increased in its display to the soul, it is not inconsistent with his character to infer that it has not decreased with respect to the body. These conclusions are borne out by the conduct of Jesus. It is true that the chief object of his mission was to save the soul, and deliver it from the power of sin. Such, indeed, was a work infinitely precious, and one which the angels desired to look into and adore. But this work did not embrace all the sympathies of his loving heart. He loved the soul, but he loved also its earthly tabernacle. The precious gem enhanced the casket in which it lay. Behold his compassion on the multitudes! When faint and hungry, they were fed by means of miracle. On the grassy plain, with the blue heaven for their ceiling, thousands sat down at God's table, partook of his bounties, and were satisfied. A mysterious, invisible, creative hand was there, exercising its wonderful power, and testifying the presence and beneficence of God. Follow the footsteps of Jesus, and mark the phases of his benevolent heart. Did

the blind beseech him to remove the dark night which had gathered over them? The light of day broke on their eyeballs, and showed them once more the human face divine. Did the deaf implore him to unstop the dull ear? The prayer was answered, and the voices of Nature found an echo in the soul. Did the multitude throng around him, with their numerous sick and dying? Were there brought to him, those tormented with devils? Did he enter the chamber of the dead, or go to the tomb of Lazarus, or meet a company of mourners at the gate of Nain? The sick were healed, the devils were cast out, and the dead were raised. But this special care did not end with the work of Jesus. It was shown in the ministry of his followers. The Seventy were sent out to preach; but they were sent out also to heal. The mission of the twelve was no less benevolent. They were to preach the blessedness of the kingdom; but they were also to heal all manner of disease. The soul was the first, the body the second object of care. The power of healing had a double object. The one was to convince men that the gospel was from on high; the other, that God desired their earthly well-being. The love of God embraced body and soul. As the second covenant is therefore a more ample display of Divine love than the first, we are warranted to conclude that the special care of God, in providing for the bodily wants of his people when exposed to enemies, will likewise be of a more ample character.

It may be instructive, as well as interesting, to give a few modern examples of God's special care in preparing a table for his people in the presence of their enemies.

"It is well known that, in the year 1686, the Duke of Savoy was prevailed on by Louis XIV. to expel the Waldensian Christians from their native valleys. In 1689 eight or nine hundred of them, through great difficulties, returned.

Dr. Calamy, in his 'Life and Times,' relates, that Mr. Arnauld, their minister and leader, told him that when they had nearly reached their houses, pursued by a number of their enemies, they were in great danger of dying from want of provisions. Such, however, was the kindness of God to them that a sudden thaw removed in one night a mass of snow from the fields, when they discovered a considerable quantity of wheat, standing in the earth, ready for the sickle, that had been suddenly covered with snow, which had now as unexpectedly left it. On this wheat they lived, till other sources supplied them with food."

God cast over the fields the protecting lap of his white robe, and, in his people's extremity, withdrew it, presenting an abundant table to supply their wants.

"Mr. Anderson, a worthy man, once a minister at Walton-upon-Thames, being a subject of persecution in England, in the year 1662, and apprehensive of the ascendancy of Popery, removed to Middleburgh in Zealand. The little money he took with him was soon expended, and he was reduced, with his family, to very great want, which his modesty would not allow him to make known. In this perplexity, after he had been at prayer one morning with his family, his children asked for some bread for their breakfast, but he, having none, nor money to buy any, they all burst into tears. While they were thus sorrowing together, the door-bell was rung. Mrs. Anderson went to the door, where she was met by a man, who presented her with a small parcel, saying it had been sent to her by a gentleman, and that some provisions would be sent shortly. On opening, the parcel, it contained forty pieces of gold. Soon afterwards, a countryman arrived, with a horse-load of every thing which could contribute to their comfort. These supplies were continued, at intervals, to his dying day, without his knowing whence they came. It afterwards appeared, these kindnesses were shown by a pious merchant at Middleburgh, who, observing a grave English minister frequently walk the streets, with a dejected countenance, inquired privately into his circumstances, and sent

him the gold by his apprentice, and the provisions by his country servant, saying, 'God forbid that any of Christ's ambassadors should be strangers, and we not visit them, or in distress, and we not assist them;' at the same time expressly charging them to conceal his name."

In the hour of need God can easily raise up a friend to relieve his faithful people who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

"The case of Sir Henry Wyatt, of Allington Castle, Kent, father of the wit and poet, takes us back to the latter days of the Red and White Roses. Wyatt, a Lancastrian in politics, spent not little of his time under watch and ward. The Wyatt papers say: He was imprisoned often; once in a cold and narrow tower, where he had neither bed to lie on, nor clothes sufficient to keep him warm, nor meat for his mouth. He had starved there, had not God, who sent a crow to feed his prophet, sent this, His and his country's martyr, a cat, both to feed and warm him. It was his own relation unto them, from whom I had it. A *cat* came one day down unto the dungeon unto him, and, as it were, offered herself unto him. He was glad of her, laid her in his bosom to warm him, and, by making much of her, won her love. After this she would come every day unto him divers times, and, when she could, bring him a pigeon. He complained to his keeper of the cold, and also of his short fare. The answer was, 'he durst not better it.' 'But,' said Sir Henry, 'if I can provide any, will you promise to dress it for me?' 'I may well enough,' said the keeper; 'you are safe for that matter;' and, being urged again, promised him, and kept his promise, and dressed for him, from time to time, such pigeons as his accator, the cat, provided for him."

God, through the agency of this little animal, prepared a table before him in presence of his enemies; and, like Joseph in the dungeon, finally raised him to great honour in his country.

"The Rev. Hanserd Knollys suffered much persecution for his conscientious attachment to the truth. In the early part of his ministry, he emigrated from England to America, the common asylum at that time for all who wished to enjoy liberty of conscience. There he sojourned four years, but returned in 1641, at the earnest request of an aged father. On his arrival in England, he was reduced to great straits, but experienced the goodness of providence in a peculiar manner. The following particulars are extracted from his own account—'I was still poor, and sojourned in lodging, till I had but sixpence left, and knew not how to provide for my wife and child. Having prayed to God, and encouraged my wife to trust in Him, and to remember former experiences, and especially that word of promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," I paid for my lodging, and went out, not knowing whither God's good hand would lead me to receive something towards my present support. About seven or eight doors from my lodging, a woman met me in the street, and told me she came to seek me, and her husband had sent her to tell me, that there was a lodging provided and prepared in his house by some Christian friends for me and my wife. I told her my present condition, and went along with her to the house. There she gave me twenty shillings which Dr. Bastock, a late sufferer, had given her for me, and some linen for my wife, which I received, and told her husband I would fetch my wife and child, and lodge there. I returned with great joy, and my wife was greatly affected with this seasonable and suitable supply. After we had returned praise to God, we went to our new lodging, where we found all things necessary provided for us, and all charges paid for fifteen weeks.' When the time was expired, he undertook a school, and by the blessing of God, was successful in bringing up a large family creditably; and though he was several times imprisoned for religion, he continued the laborious and esteemed pastor of a poor church for fifty years, till he went to his reward, on September the 19th 1691, aged ninety-two years."

He who feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the lilies

of the field, did not forget his poor servant in the dark hour, but made light arize in the midst of the gathering gloom. Pursuing the path of duty, the persecuted for conscience' sake, had confidence in the promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." This trust raised the follower of Jesus, above the fear of want, and above the fear of man. Boldly, therefore, did the disciple of the truth go forth in his mission of righteousness, knowing that "He who was for him was greater than those that were against him." Dismayed neither "by tribulation, nor distress, nor persecution, nor famine, nor nakedness, nor peril, nor sword," "he was more than a conqueror through him that loved him and gave himself for him;" being "persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor power, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature was able to separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus."

These instances of God's special care towards his people do not by any means exhaust the subject. They are, in comparison of the whole, but the first few drops before the shower. Very many, if not all, of the faithful when pondering the page of their experience, will perceive the workings of providence in preparing a table for them in the midst of opposition and trial. Could we read the narrative of the good, the pure, the excellent of the earth, what a multitude of examples would present themselves! The east and the west, the north and the south, would come forth with their thousands and tens of thousands. The Church from her beginning in Eden down to the present hour would present a multitude which no man could number. Exposed to the enmity of the world, despitefully used and persecuted till her blood has flowed like a river, she has had, in her day of darkness and want, a table prepared for her by the special

providence of God. She trusted in the promise, "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The follower of Jesus, when exposed to want and to the enmity of the world, has abundant reason to rejoice in the special care of God. Wherever he turns the eye of his faith a cloud of witnesses appear. The Hebrews in the wilderness cry aloud to him through the mist of years, and tell him to trust in Him who fed them with manna from heaven; and, with uplifted hands and hearts, turn their eyes to the refreshing streams of the flinty rock, and admonish him, saying, "O thou of little faith, wherefore canst thou doubt"? The mission of the ravens, the ministry of the angel at the juniper tree, the home in Sarepta with its wonderful supplies, bear witness, and tell him of God's special care in supporting his beloved in the hour of peril and want. The man of Uz, patient, upright, and perfect, "one that feared God and eschewed evil," speaks to him through the lapse of ages, and assures him that the Giver of all good shall not forget him in the dark hour, but shall prepare a table for him even in the presence of the enemy. David, the psalmist, fails not to touch his harp and to chant a sweet lullaby to still his fears, encourage his heart, and strengthen his confidence in the providence of God. The patriarchs from afar, the prophets and apostles with their blood-stained robes, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake in all ages, unite their voices, and cry aloud to him, saying, "Trust in the Lord, and do good: so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him: and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noon-

day. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass. For evil doers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the Lord shall inherit the earth." The Spirit of Inspiration speaks to him with its still, small voice, saying, "He that spared not his Son, but delivered him up for thee, shall he not with him also freely give thee all things?" If he has given thee the greater, shall he withhold the smaller, blessing? If he has forgiven thy sins, saved thy soul, and promised thee a heavenly crown, shall he forget to supply thee with the necessaries of life? "Therefore, take no thought, saying, What shall I eat? or What shall I drink? or Wherewithal shall I be clothed? for thy heavenly Father knoweth that thou hast need of all these things." Why, then, shouldst thou fear? Hast thou not a gracious Friend in heaven whose providence smiles upon thee, and who tells thee not to be anxious for the morrow? Do not the events of thy life, since thou didst enter the pale of the Redeemer's kingdom, convince thee that the tender care of the Great Shepherd has often led thee into green pastures, fed thee with food convenient for thee, and upheld thee in the midst of much trouble and distress? Remember the words of Jesus, who laid down his life for thee—"If thou abide in me, and my words abide in thee, thou shalt ask what thou wilt, and it shall be done unto thee." Why then shouldst thou be disquieted, cast down, when the world frowns upon thee? Is not God with thee? Is not the Saviour with thee—the angels with thee—all heaven with thee, to succour thee, and to prepare a table before thee, though multitudes should rise against thee? Be of good courage, then; be strong in the Lord, and be assured that he will ever be faithful to his promise.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE ABOUNDING GOODNESS OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over."

THE custom of anointing with oil was very common in Eastern lands. The first use of it which we find was on a very interesting occasion. In Genesis we are informed that as Jacob was on his way towards Haran, he made a pause on his journey. The sun being set, and the shadows of night gathering around him, he resolved to proceed no farther until dawn. Lying down to rest with a stone for his pillow, he dreamed a strange dream. There appeared to him a ladder resting on the earth and reaching to heaven, with angels ascending and descending. "And behold! the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and I will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Amazed at the vision, trembling he arose; and taking the stone which had served as a pillow, he "set it up

for a pillar, poured oil upon the top of it, and called the name of that place Bethel."

It is not to be concluded that the custom of anointing with oil had its rise from this event. For aught that is known the practice may be nearly as old as that of sacrifice; and, it is not improbable, may have had its origin from some ancient form of religious ceremony. In the passage which has been cited, it is plain that Jacob, being filled with pious awe, and believing the place in which he stood was holy ground, set it apart to the service of God by anointing the pillar with oil. From this fact, it may be presumed, that it was the custom of the age and country to anoint with oil on sacred occasions. At a period later than that of Jacob we find that an ointment, composed of the sweetest perfumes, was prescribed by divine authority, and was to be used only for religious purposes. With this exquisite mixture were anointed "the tabernacle of the congregation, the ark of the testimony, and the table and all its vessels, and the candlestick and its vessels, and the altar of incense, and the altar of burnt offering with all its vessels, and the laver and its foot." The priests also were anointed with this holy oil. The use of this preparation, it appears, was confined to the tabernacle, its priests, and its furniture, and was forbidden on every other occasion. In the sacred lamps, and in the meat offerings, the Hebrews were accustomed to employ a common oil. Various, indeed, were the occasions on which it was used. He who was set apart to the office of king or prophet, was, by divine command, anointed with oil, the ceremony being usually performed by a priest or seer. It was also customary to anoint the head, the hair, or the feet of a person as a token of love and respect for his character. It was a common practice among the Jews to anoint the dead bodies of their relatives as a means of

retarding their corruption. This was their mode of embalming. In the East, even at the present day, it is not unusual to anoint the sick, as oil is considered to possess certain medicinal properties. In the epistle of James we find the use of oil applied to the sick in connection with prayer—"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church: and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and the prayer of faith shall save the sick; and the Lord shall raise him up: and if he have committed sins they shall be forgiven." The prayers of the elders, in connection with oil, or medical means, appears to be a principle laid down by inspiration; and though the command is now neglected, it is no evidence that the divine utterance, and the blessings accompanying it, have no foundation in truth. There is reason to believe that were the Christian Church, in our own days, faithfully and piously to carry out the doctrine taught here, the blessings of recovery and forgiveness, promised in the passage, would doubtless be fulfilled. On festive or important occasions, whether religious or otherwise, it was a custom, very general throughout the East, to anoint the head with the most fragrant perfumes. This was done, no doubt, as an expression of respect for the object which had called them together. Hence, anointing the head became a symbol of prosperity or joy, whether of a temporal or a spiritual kind. The same may be also said of the expression, "my cup runneth over," which denotes abundance of blessings, as regards both body and soul. This was true of the Psalmist David. He was highly favoured of God. His measure of blessing was greater than any other man's. From the humble occupation of a shepherd he was elevated to the dignity of a throne. From being a fugitive in the desert, hunted like a partridge of the mountains, and in

constant peril of his life, he became the invincible bulwark of the nation. But he was no less distinguished for his piety. Great, indeed, was its fervour and constancy, "O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee; my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness: and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: when I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate upon thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help; therefore, in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me." "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." "Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments." In the fulness of his joy, greatly blessed both with the earthly and the heavenly, truly could the Psalmist say: "Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over."

The people of God are not always like David, who was blessed with great riches, and high and honourable position. These, for the most part, are possessed by the children of this world, and seldom belong to the followers of the Lamb. Are not the rich, in most cases, the covetous, the vain, the ambitious, or those whose hearts lie within the pale of the earthly? Are not they who occupy high stations, who are clothed with power, and honour, and majesty, too often the votaries of pride and worldly applause, and, sometimes, the agents of tyranny, cruelty, and crime? Well had it been for thousands had they never been rich or powerful; better for them had they passed their days in poverty and in the

vale of obscurity. In such circumstances, their days might have glided away in comparative innocence and peace, free from those crimes which have been the bane, not only of their own happiness, but also that of many others. How much better had it been for Haman had he never been invested with power, or honoured with the imperial smile! Happier far had it been for him had he occupied the peasant's lowly home, and been a stranger to riches and palatial halls. Then might he have shunned the hatred and curses of a nation, and avoided the disgrace of an untimely end. Better, too, had it been for Hazael had he never aspired to the throne, but continued an officer in the court of Syria. Exalted to regal power, and enabled to indulge the worst passions of his nature, he became a monster of crime. Sad to Israel was the day which saw Hazael raised to his guilty eminence. Well might Elisha, whose prophetic eye beheld the slaughter of babes, the butchery of women, the young men, the flower of the land, cruelly put to the sword, and the strongholds on fire, weep over the horrible crimes which the ambitious adventurer was soon to commit. Wise was the prayer of Agur when he said—"Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain."

Riches and honours and power, if not under the guiding influence of the gospel, or under the direction of genuine, moral principle, are, whether to the man of the world, or to the follower of the Lamb, an evil rather than a good. Whatever has a tendency to foster the evil inclinations of the heart cannot be a blessing to anyone. A man is happy or unhappy in proportion as he rises or falls in the scale of virtue. Every guilty thought, every guilty feeling, or every

evil action, whatever be its form or character, however great or however little it may be, is invariably followed by punishment corresponding to its deserts. Let no one imagine that a sin, or a course of sin, however secret it may be, will secure him from its penal consequences. As sure as day follows night, and night follows day, so sure will punishment follow sin. Such is the law of God and the constitution of man, that it must be so. He who formed us has ordained an order of things, a moral order, which cannot be disturbed without causing more or less misery. If the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, who has established this order, be dishonoured by the breach of divine law, what can be expected to follow but misery in every form and variety? Know, then, that every thought and feeling, every word and action, being in the direction either of good or of evil, is raising you either in the scale of virtue or sinking you in the scale of vice, and is either adding to your happiness or increasing your misery. But should anyone be successful in life, and become the recipient of honour, wealth, and power, these acquisitions, unless under the influence of the gospel, or directed by the principles of moral right, will be to the possessor, and those around him, sources of corruption and vice. This fact has been fully established in the history of man. When the heart is corrupt, the desires, appetites, and passions, have a downward tendency, enlisting in their service whatever adds to their gratification. As a tree, the longer it is suffered to grow, takes a deeper and stronger hold of the soil; so the heart, the longer it indulges in the pleasures of sin, takes a deeper and stronger hold of corruption. To anyone, possessing such a heart, wealth, or worldly advantages, will prove but a snare; and instead of smoothing the path of life, and planting it with flowers, will render it more rugged, and fill it with thorns

and briers. Much happier would it have been for Saul had he never ascended the throne. His weakness, selfishness, and impiety; his jealousy, duplicity, and malice, might have slumbered in silence, or remained unknown beyond his peasant home. Being under the influence of little or no religious principle, and guided by the suggestions of a corrupt heart, the advantages of his position served only to mature the native vices of his soul. The imperial power with which he was invested, instead of being a source of blessing, became a curse, both to himself and his country. It was not otherwise with most of the Hebrew kings, whether in the Old Testament or the New. Their exalted state, the gift of a good God, and meant to be a blessing, was abused, and therefore became a fertile source of vice, misery, and woe. Such abuse was not confined to the kings of Judea: it extended all over the world, not only to those who swayed the sceptre, but to others of inferior rank. In our own times, in our own land, how many painful instances have occurred! Hear, for example, the confession of the Earl of Chesterfield, a nobleman for whom nature had done much, and birth and education more. He was, in his day, allowed to be the most elegant and accomplished man in Europe; and he was no less conspicuous in the political than in the fashionable world. No man ever possessed greater advantages for the attainment and enjoyment of worldly pleasure, and no man ever drank more deeply of the sweet, but poisonous draught. Let us hear him at a time when disease and age hung heavily upon him, and rendered him incapable of further enjoyment:—"I have seen, said he, the silly rounds of business and of pleasure, and have done with them all. I have enjoyed all the pleasures of the world, and consequently know their fatality, and do not regret their loss. I appraise them at their real value, which is, in truth,

very low. Whereas, those that have not experienced, always overrate them. They see only the gay outside, and are dazzled at the glare. But I have been behind the scenes. I have seen all the coarse pulleys and dirty ropes which exhibit and move the gaudy machines; and I have seen and smelt the tallow candles which illuminated the whole decorations to the astonishment of the ignorant audience. When I reflect on what I have seen, on what I have heard, and what I have done, I can hardly persuade myself that all that frivolous hurry of bustle and pleasure of the world had any reality; but I look upon all that is past as one of those romantic dreams which opium produces; and I do not desire, by any means, to repeat the nauseous dose for the sake of the fugitive dreams. Shall I tell you that I bear this melancholy situation with that meritorious constancy and resignation of which most people boast? No: for I really cannot help it. I bear it because I must bear it, whether I will or no! I think of nothing but killing time the best way I can, now that it has become mine enemy. It is my resolution to SLEEP in the carriage during the remainder of my journey." Miserable man! Had he sought the Saviour with half the zeal he sought the world; had his footsteps been guided by the spirit of inspiration; and, instead of devoting his genius, his fine natural powers, and the advantages of birth, education, and riches, to pride, folly, and sensual enjoyment; had he consecrated them to him "who loved him and gave himself for him," would he have been so unhappy in his age? Would conscious existence have been a burden that he could not bear, but which he had to bear? Far otherwise: age would have been a blessing—enjoying a peace which the world could neither give nor take away. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. He that

soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

But to the man whose walk through life is in accordance with divine rule, riches, and honours, and power, instead of being an evil, become a source of much good. They widen the sphere of his usefulness and enjoyments. By them he can multiply his deeds of beneficence, and dispel nameless evils which embitter many a heart and home. He feels himself to be but a steward of all that he possesses, and knows that he must give an account to God of the stewardship with which he has been entrusted. The talents committed to his care are neither tied up in a napkin nor buried in the earth. To put them to usury he feels it to be his duty and his joy. To counsel the wayward, to raise the fallen, to soothe the sorrowful, and to heal the wounded and broken-hearted, are to him so many sources of enjoyment. Like his great Master, his happiness consists in doing good to his fellow-men. How blessed is the man who maketh such a use of his honours, riches, and power! Like streams of water in a dry, parched land, he refreshes, revives, strengthening and beautifying all around.

But however much the earthly may add to the happiness of the pious, it falls far short of what the heavenly can give. The one places them but little above the level of the brute; the other raises them to that of the angel. The joys of the earthly are as a dream; when gone, their remembrance often calls forth a sigh or a tear: those of the heavenly are a blessed reality, cheering the pilgrim on his rough path, and filling his heart with a satisfaction and peace unknown to the votary of the world. The one is a meteor that blazes for a little and dies: the other, a luminary which shines with a constant light, and lives forever. The pleasures of the

former often become stale and tasteless; those of the latter are ever fresh and delightful. The one is a feeble flower which the breath of winter destroys: the other, the flinty rock against which the tempest beats in vain. The earthly is a fountain, polluted, foul, and poisonous: the heavenly, a clear, crystal river of life, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. The one is a dangerous path which leads but to the mountain top: the other a golden ladder which reaches to heaven. The former is but the threshold to blissfulness; the latter is blissfulness itself. The earthly is full of beautiful promises, but which are doomed to wither and die: the heavenly is fuller of fairer ones, and which are destined to flourish and bloom forever.

But let us consider for a little the blessings of the man whose head is anointed with oil, and whose cup runneth over. These, in the spiritual sense, are peace and joy. All that can add to a believer's bliss lies within the pale of these. Further ambition cannot go. If the heart is undisturbed and still as the lake when the winds no longer sport on its waters, or richly serene as the sky when clothed in its everlasting blue, as if it felt something of that pure delight which blessed the earthly paradise, a delight capable of satisfying all its desires, what more can the treasury of heaven bestow? In a world so full of change and trial, in which no man's condition is steadfast or secure, how important is it to have a firm foundation on which to stand! No man who is trusting to a scene so full of uncertainty can enjoy a tranquil mind. Often will his expectations of approaching good, and his hopes so full of sunshine and flowers, be disappointed. Even when he has attained the object of his ambition his happiness falls far short of his expectations. To the things of time he has attached a value which they never possessed; and, perhaps, he is ready to

say with the wise man, "All is vanity and vexation of spirit." No man who trusts to the world can long enjoy the comfort of a peaceful mind. His experience admonishes him that trial, and sickness, and death, lie before him. He knows not what may be in the womb of the next hour. It may bring forth good, or it may bring forth evil. To him the future of this life is a mystery, at one time awakening his hopes, at another his fears. Painfully indeed must he think of his last hour. How terrible! Before him are death, and the worm, and the judgment-seat, and a miserable destiny. How little, how very little, can his riches, his honours, and power, soothe the agony of his thoughts, and inspire his heart with the blessedness of peace! These are all miserable comforters; and instead of softening, too often aggravate his distress. How different is it with the man whose head is anointed with oil, and whose cup runneth over! He has a peace which the world knows not, and which it cannot destroy, a peace that rests on no earthly foundation, and which is neither the possession of broad lands nor the offspring of flattery or fame. It is steadfast in poverty, constant in tribulation, and undisturbed amidst all the changes of life. It is neither chilled by adversity nor flattered by prosperity. The dark cloud which carries the storm in its bosom may gather around him, but it disturbs not the blessedness of this peace. He who has it calmly looks down as from a height, and hears beneath him the mutterings of the thunder, but feels no alarm. He knows that all the events of this life are under the guidance of Him who is infinitely wise and good; and though the dealings of providence may appear sometimes mysterious, he feels satisfied that they are working for his welfare both in this life and in that which is to come.

He who would feel the blessedness of such a peace and

joy, must have full confidence in the God of providence. This is the chief foundation of this happy state of mind. Without it there can be little peace or joy. Destitute of such a confidence, the heart has nothing on which to rest, but like a ship without an anchor, without a helm, is tossed about hither and thither by every successive change. How different is it with the man who places his confidence in God! He has built his house upon a rock; and he fears neither the descending rain nor the destroying flood. His foundation is secure. He stands on the Rock of Ages, and bids defiance to the storm. He feels assured that all the events of providence are under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness, and that they are all working together for good to them that love God. He knows that "they who trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abideth for ever." The storm may arise; but to him it bears a mission of peace, speaking in a language which his heart fails not to understand. The mysterious workings of God's providence, how dark soever they may sometimes appear, neither weaken his trust, nor awaken his fears. He looks back into the past, and casts his eye along the stream of other years, and fails not to discover God's wisdom and care, leading him by a way which he knew not, and by paths that to him were unknown. Rough paths may, for a time, be his lot. These may be parts of the way over which it is needful to travel. The path to the New Jerusalem is not always through green and flowery meadow-land. This he knows, and, knowing it, cheerfully commits his way to God, and says,—"Behold, God is my salvation: I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my shield; he also is become my salvation."

But in order to enjoy more fully this happy state of mind,

it is necessary to have the forgiveness of sin and the hope of a blessed hereafter. All sin, whatever be its character or measure, has a disturbing power. As well might a man take poison, and expect no harm, as to commit sin and think to feel no diminution of his peace and joy. Both God and nature unite to punish the transgressor. See the desert of sin in the broken constitution, in the emaciated form, in the premature death: behold it in the stings of conscience, tormenting the guilty, filling them with alarm, causing them to confess their crimes, and to give themselves up into the hands of justice. Hard is the way of the transgressor. But there is more. The penal consequences which follow sin have a future. They begin in time, but pass over its boundary line. They are the ministers of God's displeasure, executing his justice in the world to come. No unpardoned sinner who believes in the life beyond time, in its joys and its sorrows, in its pleasures and its pains, in its happiness and its horrors, can enjoy the blessedness of a peaceful mind. It cannot be. The prospect of coming ill embitters the present, robs the heart of its peace, and disperses its joy. In this world the happiness or the misery which most men feel, is chiefly the offspring of future expectation. If a man's expectations are full of sunshine, he rejoices; if of darkness, he sorrows. On the contrary it is not less true. Though his present state is dark, yet, if his prospects are bright, he feels comparatively happy. The light which the future reflects, disperses the darkness of the present hour. If so, is it possible for any one whose sins are unforgiven, on whom the "wrath of God abideth," to feel the blessedness of peace or joy? Before him, all is midnight darkness. In imagination, how heavily, how sadly, does the last sound of life fall upon his ear! Does it not carry a message of wrath, and say, "Take ye the unprofitable servant,

and cast him into outer darkness"? Can riches, or power, or any form of worldly pleasure soothe the misery of such a condition? In such a state, what avails the social gathering, the gay dance, or the sound of the harp or viol! Can these soothe the anxious heart, ease the conscience, or remove the fears of the future? They may, it is true, give momentary aid, and excite a pleasing sense of joy, but, like the blazing midnight meteor that flits across the sky, enlightening but for an instant the surrounding gloom, they leave the mind darker than it was before. Different, very different is it with the man whose sins are forgiven, whose hopes are those of heavenly bliss. Before him all is light. For him, death has no fears; the grave, no darkness; hell, no horrors. To him the grim destroyer bears a message of peace, calling him to his better home. All of him that is earthly does, indeed, drop into unconscious repose; but that mysterious something which thinks, judges, reasons, and rejoices, and which he properly calls himself, steps forth in its immortality from the fallen ruins, and enters the abode of angelic throngs. The change which alarms the ungodly, to him is a source of joy. If he leaves an earthly estate, he exchanges it for a heavenly one. When separated from those whom he loved below, when removed from the voices which were dear to his heart, he knows that sweeter voices and more affectionate hearts await him on high. In that hour, therefore, when fear and despair are gathering around the bed of the dying, unforgiven sinner, the blessedness of peace, a joy unspeakable and full of glory, even the hope of a happy immortality fill the heart of the believer, and give him a foretaste of his heavenly home. Of such a one it may be truly said that his head is anointed with oil, and that the cup of his enjoyments is running over.

SECTION II.

The Believer's Confidence in the Continuance of God's Love and Care.

CHAPTER I.

HE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE CONTINUING GRACIOUS SUPPLIES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I shall not want."

NUMEROUS, indeed, are the wants of man. These, from the period he enters the world until his departure out of it, flow in a constant stream. Feebler ıan the tenderest flower that blooms by the way-side, he lants his footsteps on the shore of time. Helpless and ependent on others, he brings with him neither silver, nor ɔld, nor jewels, to recompense the unwearied care of a ıother whose love is stronger than death. Of all living ıings, he is, perhaps, the most dependent, delicate, and efenceless, seeming the very personification of wants and eakness. Most of the lower forms of life, when they come ıto the world, are able, after a short interval, to use the ıeans of self-preservation. But it is not so with man. Tearisome days and sleepless nights, much anxiety and ıre, and long years, are required before he can use the ecessary means of supporting himself. As time measures ıt its silent watches, his wants multiply and grow. New esires, new affections, new passions arise and widen the ırcle of his activities. The toy which once delighted, elights no more. The games and the gambols of childhood ıse their interest and enjoyment. To meet the wants of ıe expanding mind, objects and pursuits of a higher kind re required. When years have developed the boy into the

man, and opened to his eye the dreamy attractions of life, many a desire comes forth into being, and, living in the silence and secrecy of the heart, never attains the object of its pursuit. Seldom, indeed, do these tenants of the invisible world give peace or comfort to the mind; but, like the meteors of the desert, too often mislead their deluded followers, guiding their footsteps into some miserable quagmire. When the desires overleap the boundaries of moderation, when the fancy becomes heated, and forms to itself an earthly paradise, there is sure to follow disappointment, misery, or pain. God and nature have fixed certain limits beyond which no earthly aspiration can go with safety; and these, when overstepped, never fail to punish the transgressor in proportion to his offence. On the contrary, the desires, when kept within due bounds, and restrained by divine law, seldom fail in attaining their object and in receiving that enjoyment which virtue only can give. Let it not be forgotten that desires, tending to excess, will magnify their object, mislead the understanding, and produce disappointment, trouble, and pain. Often have they been the downfall of individuals as well as of nations. Their unjust and undue influence has destroyed the peace of many a home, given rise to cruel wars, and, not unfrequently, led to bloody persecutions. Could man restrain his desires, and keep them within the pale of God's commands, the earth would be a paradise. Might would no longer be right. Legal and illegal robberies would cease. The measured step of the stately constable as he paces the thoroughfare, would be no longer heard. Nation would cease to rise against nation; and the sword of the warrior would be turned into the ploughshare.

But desires, though injurious when immoderate, yet, when duly regulated by divine law, are the great springs of

human industry and improvement. Without these, man would be, in a great measure, a purely contemplative being, unsuited for the purposes of this life. Like a stately ship without sails in the midst of a calm sea, he would make little progress in science, art, or moral excellence. There would be no special inducements to concentrate the powers of his intellect on any given subject. No one is likely to improve in any branch, whether of business or of science, to which he feels a coldness or an indifference. In such a case, the energies of the mind would act but feebly and with little continuance. Under such circumstances, well directed and well sustained energy, in any department of labour, or of study, could hardly be expected. He who has no desire for the useful, the beautiful, the good, and the holy (could there be such a form of humanity), would be a blot, a blank on the face of creation. But it is otherwise. God has not so formed man. He is not only a contemplative, but also an active being, capable of godlike thought, and unwearied energy. How many are the monuments of his intellect and activity! How many are the examples of devotion to science, of self-sacrifice for truth, and of indomitable perseverance in the service of heaven! Think of the lowly and pure-minded Nazarene, a living embodiment of love. Stronger than death was his devotion to God and his benevolence to man. For these he lived, and died, and rose, and ascended to heaven. For righteousness' sake, how many of his followers, who trod the same path, have been cast into dungeons, or exposed to wild beasts, or wandered in desert places, desolate and destitute, or perished in the fires of martyrdom! And in the world of science, how abundant have been the memorials of mental activity and material advancement! And every age which has passed away, has added to the numerous examples of those

who have borne the burden and heat of the day, and laboured for the best interests of their fellowmen. Were there no wants, no desires, the world would become a dead pool, poisoning the atmosphere, and destroying all improvement and human enjoyment.

Probably, the desires of the human heart are never *finally* satisfied, neither in this world nor in that which is to come. Doubtless it is true with respect to this life. How few do we meet who have no wants nor wishes! Is it amongst the poor? No; even there a few cannot be found. The mind of the humblest and least ambitious feels that there is something which it wishes to attain. Ask the meanest of men if there is anything which he desires to possess, and, at once, a long catalogue of wants will follow. But the rich, and the great ones of the earth—what of them? Have they no wants? Are all their desires satisfied? Is the measure of their wishes full and final? No; their wants are more numerous and extensive than those of the humble cottager. Increase of wealth and advancement of earthly position stimulate human ambition, whet the appetite, and multiply desires an hundred-fold. Think of the Macedonian king. His splendid victories and large acquisitions only widened the field of his unreasonable wants. The world was even too small for his ambitious aims. Behold him, as he sits on the shores of his native land, shedding tears of sorrow because there was not another world to conquer. But had there been another, would its conquest have filled up the measure of his desires? If one could not satisfy, would two, would ten, would a thousand have satisfied? As the desires of the great conqueror appeared to grow, as he extended his victories, the probability is, that in proportion to his victories, however numerous, so would his ambition have grown. If such be the fact of one man's ambitious desires,

may it not be the fact of all men's ambitious desires? As to the boundless nature of man's desires, the difference may consist not so much in kind as to their unlimited character, as in the intensity of their operation. In the hero of Macedon, the desire of conquest burned with an intensity bordering on madness. In the commonalty the desires, wants, or wishes may be of a more temperate kind, and yet as extensive in their range. Varied, indeed, are the objects of desire amongst mankind. Some love the arts of war; others the arts of peace. Some love the sunshine of public life; others the shade of private life. The philosophic tutor of Alexander was as ambitious as his master, and prosecuted his conquests in the fields of science with an ardour equal to that of his distinguished pupil. It is not, however, recorded that he sat down and wept that there were no more fields of science to conquer.

But granting that man's desires in the life to come will never be *finally* satisfied, would such a state of things be at variance with his happiness in the heavenly Paradise? We know that in this world it is no easy matter, if it be at all possible, to find any one whose wishes are fully and finally satisfied. It is true that in the course of life moments occur in which there seems to be no further desire. This state of mind, however, is but temporary. The hour of satisfaction fades and dies. New objects of desire step forth, and present their attractions to the mind. New aspirations arise, awaking effort, and pursuit, and perseverance. The labour, the very labour, requisite in the attainment of a favourite object, is not a source of unhappiness, especially when it is a laudable one. Even labour in itself, when moderate and well regulated, constitutes a source of enjoyment. The pleasure, however, is greatly enhanced when it is associated with the pursuit of an object which is good, or

great, or excellent. Our happiness on earth does, indeed, consist chiefly, if not altogether, in the effort to accomplish the object of our wishes; and were there nothing further to desire, no more to attain, that very happiness would pass away. If so, it would follow that the happiness of man, with a mental, and moral, and active nature, as now possessed by him, would, in the heavenly state, require that such desires were never finally satisfied, and, moreover, that the object of these desires were boundless in their range. If the future life is one of activity, there must be an object or objects to engage that activity. But did the object or objects not interest the desires, there would be little or no enjoyment; or supposing that the object of desire was known to be unattainable, the happiness in pursuing it would come to a close. No one can feel happy in the pursuit of an object which they know to be unattainable. Such a course of action would yield no more satisfaction than trying to grasp the ocean with a span, or to bend the rainbow into an ellipse. Where there is no useful end to serve, no knowledge to attain, no virtue to acquire, the mind of man cannot be happy. No good man can feel happy if he cannot, in some way or other, improve either himself or those around him. Constituted as man's soul now is, it would therefore seem that the desire, want, or wishes of his nature will never be finally satisfied in the regions of bliss.

When David says in the beginning of the Psalm, "I shall not want," probably he means not only this life, but also the life which is to come. The concluding verse of this beautiful ode is evidence that his faith and hope extended to the heavenly state. He says plainly enough, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord *for ever*"; and he knew that his term of years in the earthly tabernacle of the Lord was not "for ever." It was, therefore, the upper sanctuary,

the New Jerusalem, in which he was to dwell through ceaseless ages to come. It was there in that spirit-land that the Good Shepherd would supply all his wants as they arose in endless succession in the measureless roll of eternity. How happy such a state of mind! Provided for not only in this this life, but likewise in the heavenly one, he had abundant reason "to rejoice, yea, with joy unspeakable and full of glory." In this world, when any one of low estate, of poor parentage or of humble means, comes into possession of a rich inheritance, what satisfaction and joy—what hopes—what pleasing views of life arise in his mind! For a time all things seem changed. The cloud which hung over life is dispersed. The sunshine of the heart comes forth, beautifies every object, and makes all earthly things glow with delight. The world appears like the threshold of Paradise. Old things have passed away; behold all things are become new. If in this world such a change of mind can be produced by an inheritance, which can be enjoyed for only a few years, and which the pale hand of death may take away at any hour, how much more ought any one to be satisfied and happy, when he knows to a certainty that he is even more abundantly provided for both in this life and in that which is to come. There is no comparison. The one is but a drop of water compared to the mighty ocean. Even such a comparison fails. Can a man tell how many measures of time are in eternity? Can he tell when the sands of eternity will cease to flow? Can he tell how many cubic miles are contained in boundless space? Can he tell the age of the Deity? If not—if he fails to calculate the giddy depths of infinity, and the endless march of years through eternity, and find that the figures of time are but as the small dust on the balance, what ought to be the joy of the people of God in estimating the blessed provision made for them both in

this life and in that which knows no end! The mind and heart of man are too small to contain the vastness of the thought and to approach the feeling of joy. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God has prepared for those who love him. It is higher than heaven; what can we know! deeper than the earth; what can we understand! Its length and its breadth can be measured by Him only who can tell the number of the stars.

Dear reader, are you a follower of the humble Nazarene? Is the spirit of his teaching felt in your heart and embodied in your life? Is it so? Pause for a little. Do not treat these questions with indifference. Can you say, Yes? If so, you have the blessed privilege of saying with the Psalmist, "I shall not want." Yes, you shall not want, neither in this life, nor in the life which is to come. Is this not cheering? What a security against the ills with which the world abounds! How it represses our fears and enlivens our hopes! When fully realised, it sheds over the heart a sweet sunshine of peace and joy. How comforting would it be if the sovereign of these realms would say to a poor, anxious, labouring man, Fear not, you shall never want—no, nor your dear children after you. I will see to it and make sure. Would that father and his family remain cold and indifferent? Would not their lowly cottage-home ring with joy? Would not all their fears of future want and trouble be dispersed? Would not every anxious thought be removed? Would not gratitude, and peace, and joy reign in their hearts? Yes, for a time; they would rejoice with joy unspeakable, and feel as if earth had become a paradise. If so, if this would be the effect produced by the promise of an earthly sovereign, how much more the promise of Him who is King of kings, and the Lord of lords! Is the

promise of the Great Shepherd, "Thou shalt not want," less extensive in its range of blessings, less faithful in its accomplishment, and less able to awaken the deeper feelings of the heart than that of earthly royalty? There is no comparison. The promises of the great ones of the world are at best uncertain, limited in their range, and extending only to a few brief years. How different are the promises of God! No uncertainty casts its anxious shadow over them —no period says, "Hither shall ye come, and no further"; and neither can death lay them low with the sleeper. How comforting, how joyful, how unspeakably blessed, it is to be able to say from the depths of the heart, "I shall not want"—shall not want either in health, or in sickness, in life or in death, in time or in eternity. Dear reader, is this the language of your heart and life? Why not? Is there any good reason that it should not? Pause, think, meditate. Do not say you have not time, or that it is beyond your power. Do not say that you will consider the matter at some future time. You have time. God and your conscience know that you have time. If you can put off the consideration of so important a subject now, what reason have you that you will ever think of it again? Will your heart be in a better condition to consider and accept the truths of the lowly Nazarene, when weeks, or months, or years have passed away? No; you will then be in a less fit state of mind to relish the grand truths of him "who spake as never man spake." Your heart will be more entwined with the world. Would you be a follower of Jesus, begin—immediately begin; lose not a day. Take up the Record of Divine Truth, study its sacred pages, and ask God to open your understanding. Be assured that the heavenly Teacher will aid your efforts, and if you persevere, finally bring you to the knowledge of the truth; and then will you be able to say with the Psalmist, "I shall not want."

CHAPTER II.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE CONTINUING GOODNESS AND MERCY OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

WHATEVER has been our experience in life, we are likely to conclude that the future will, in a great measure, resemble that of the past. This is natural. We judge from what we know, not from what we do not know; from the facts and trains of thought with which the mind has been conversant; and from these we infer what will probably be the character of the events which will befal us in the course of life. Some men are very fortunate; others very unfortunate, in the world. The former will look forward to the future with hope and joy; the latter, with doubt and fear. The one will expect much of the sunshine of prosperity; the other, much of the darkness of adversity. Much, however, though not all, will depend on individual character. Some men, through ignorance, idleness, vice, and stupidity, can scarcely be otherwise than unfortunate. Others, again, on the contrary, from their superior knowledge, industry, perseverance, and sobriety, are, for the most part, successful in their worldly undertakings. There are certain conditions with which, would we be successful in our pursuits, we must comply. There are principles which govern prosperity, and there are principles that govern adversity. There is a path which

leads to fortune, and a path which leads to misfortune. A false step in life may lead to years of trouble, and blast the prospects even of a long lifetime; on the other hand, one step taken under the guidance of good principles and well-tried experience, is almost sure to lead to a happy conclusion. A course of action in harmony with virtue, and with the acknowledged rights of man, based on the unchangeable truth of God, must, in the nature of things, be productive of good. The smile of Heaven will rest on the man who perseveres in such a course, at once so pure and holy. He will have a treasure of peace within which will be thrice more precious to his soul than all that riches, all that wealth e'er gave. In reality a man's wealth ought to be estimated, not so much from what he possesses without, as from what he possesses within himself. What would it profit a man though he should gain the whole world, and yet have a mind troubled with many cares? He would be a loser. His world-wide treasure would be to him a source of much anxiety and fear. Better for him did he own but a few acres, in some quiet, rural retreat, away from the noise and excitement of so great responsibilities. Wealth, unless under the government of high religious principle, is far, very far, from being a blessing to its owner. Too often does it foster pride, vitiate the heart, enfeeble the mind, and lead to cruelty and oppression. Had Hazael remained in private life, or even in the capacity of a military chief, and never aspired to the Syrian throne, there is every reason to believe that he would never have perpetrated those horrible cruelties and desolating barbarities of which he was afterwards guilty. When the prophet Elisha foretold him the character of his crimes, he was filled with abhorrence, and replied, "Is thy servant a dog that he should do these things?" Yet, strange to say, when clothed with the imperial purple, he

became a monster of cruelty, committing all those deeds of darkness which the prophet foretold. Oppressive tyrant! couldst thou have peace in thy soul, when the blood of thousands was reeking upon thy sword? Could there be happiness in thy palace halls when the wail of so many mothers and innocent babes was ringing in thine ears? Did the despairing looks of thy murdered victims, when they besought thee for mercy, awaken in thy heart the desire only of cruelty and blood? Impersonation of barbarities! enemy of thy species! murderer of defenceless women and children! let thy name descend to all future generations, as the scourge and curse of mankind. How very different was the character of the Sweet Singer of Israel! Endowed by nature with great abilities, and as prudent and pious as he was courageous, he rose from a humble condition of life to the dignity of the throne. All his undertakings were marked with what the world calls success. He was, indeed, a successful man. But the means by which he accomplished his ends, and which raised him to so distinguished an eminence, was neither of a treacherous, barbarous, nor disloyal kind. The first act which brought him under regal notice, and attracted national attention, was his duel with Goliath. This, for a time, secured the favour and esteem of the Hebrew king. Jealousy, at length, took possession of the monarch's mind. The shepherd boy left his harp in the palace hall, and sought for a hiding-place amongst the thickets and hills of his own dear land. Hunted like a wild beast of the forest, and for years, having no certain dwelling-place, he maintained his integrity to his king and his piety to God. In looking over his past life, and contemplating its eventful character, he felt that goodness and mercy had been his constant companions. He had been delivered out of the paw of the lion, and out of the

paw of the bear; out of the hands of the ungodly Philistine, and the revengeful Saul. Such being the experience of his years, and such his faith in the Good Shepherd of Israel, who had been his Protector and Guide, that, as to his remaining days, he could say with all confidence, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

Goodness and mercy are related to each other, and resemble one another in their general character. Mercy may be called goodness; for its very nature is good. It displays much of its heavenly parentage, much of the heart of God. It is one of the most precious and beautiful attributes of the Divine Father. Without it the earth would be full of darkness, and be the abode of cruelty, oppression, murder, and the worst of all wickedness. Mercy supposes a creature in a painful condition, either of body or of mind, or it may be both of body and mind. It implies a feeling of compassion, and a desire or willingness to relieve the sufferer. Were there no distress, no unhappiness in the world, there would be no field for the exercise of mercy. The very existence of this amiable attribute in the Divine Father would imply that intelligent creatures would come into being and require its exercise. It is difficult indeed to believe that any of the divine capabilities could be without a proper object on which to terminate or exercise its peculiar power. In man the eye was made to see, and the ear to hear; but they were made to see and to hear something, otherwise they were made in vain. It is also true of all the powers with which man is endowed. Each of them has its appropriate object in which to terminate, and its peculiar mission to fulfil. It is no less true with respect to all the attributes of the Divine Father. Each of them has its object, each its appropriate field of action. Such appears to be the

facts, as far as human experience and observation have been able to discover. If so, it follows that the attribute of divine mercy presupposed that there would be sin and misery in the world; and, also, that it would be exercised towards the guilty and unhappy sons of men.

These two attributes of goodness and mercy are beautifully shown in the parable of the Prodigal Son. A father, we are told, had two sons, living in peace and plenty in a home. Far away from the allurements of vice and the pride of courtly display, their days passed away amidst the sunshine of rural life. The evening and the morning came and went, but saw no disturbing change. The calm of peace was not, however, always to continue. The younger of the sons having come of age, became dissatisfied with the paternal home, and demanded the portion of goods which fell to his share. As it was probably the custom of the country, when children arrived at a certain age, the father divided between his two sons that portion of his estate which fell to their share. No sooner had the younger brother received his portion of the inheritance than he went into a distant land. Whether to free himself from the moral government of his affectionate father, or to engage in some mercantile enterprize, we are not informed. He went away, very probably against his father's will, and, it may be, in opposition to his entreating tears. Far, far from his home and the warning voice of his parents, he was left to follow the bent of his wayward inclinations. Unhappily for him, like many others who disobey their parents, he became the victim of evil companions, leading an irregular life, indulging in all manner of vice, and wantonly spending the portion of goods which fell to his share. Reduced to poverty by folly and vice, and menaced by want, he betook himself to an occupation peculiarly hateful and degrading to a Jew. He

became a swine-herd. Penniless and perishing with hunger, in consequence of his folly and the prevalence of famine, he fain would have eaten the husks which fed his brutal charge. In this situation "he came to himself." The course which he had lately pursued and its painful consequences, awakened his reflection. He thought of his once loved home, with all its plenty and pleasing associations. He thought, perhaps, of his father's love and his father's tears. Contrite and miserable, he resolved to return to that home which he formerly despised. Would his father and family whom he had dishonoured by his conduct, receive the ungrateful wanderer? Would their quiet fire-side again warm him, the well-supplied table feed him, and the full, rich wardrobe clothe him? Would he ever enjoy the sunshine of a mother's love? Would he again tread those fields, and sleep under that roof which had been the witnesses of his boyhood's years? Would his heart be filled with joy on again beholding the steeps of his own dear land? Ragged, emaciated, contrite, and full of doubts and fears, he resolved to return to his once despised home, and to ask his father for the meanest employment in his house. As he approached, while yet far off, his father sees him even in the distance. The deepest fountains of his love and pity cast forth their waters. All his bowels move with compassion. All the father rises in his soul. The joy of his heart is full. His sorrow has passed away as a dark dream. The light of other years has arisen in his heart. He awaits not the approach of his contrite boy; but he runs with all the life of a father's love, and falling upon his neck, kisses him. "Father," says the wanderer, "I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight; and I am no more worthy to be called thy son." I have trampled thy goodness under my feet, and, by my conduct, dishonoured thy name. My sins rise before

me like a dark cloud, and overwhelms the hope of thy pardoning grace. Make me, O my father, but the meanest of thy slaves; and let me once more behold thy face in peace. "But the father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, and put it on him: and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found."

Such is the character of God's goodness and mercy to every contrite, returning sinner. With more than a father's love, he is waiting, waiting till the wanderer "comes to himself." And the greater the poverty, raggedness, and misery of his spiritual state, the greater the goodness and mercy of God. The very chief of sinners, therefore, has no reason to fear. Though the sinner should feel his sins to be as high as heaven, as deep as the sea, or as numerous as the leaves of the forest, the divine goodness and mercy become only the more expansive and intense to meet the spiritual wants of the erring one. Fear not, then, thou chief of sinners. For thee, there is abundant mercy, treasured up in the heart of God. Exhaust it, thou canst not. To thee, and to all without exception, it is as free as the breezes of heaven, as the dews of a summer's morn, or as the light which beautifies the world. Return to thy Father, thou wanderer of the night. Why dost thou love the darkness rather than the light? Art thou afraid of thy best and dearest friend? Wilt thou rather live on the filthy husks of vice, wear the rags of thy lost condition, and remain an outlaw to heaven, than eat of the fatlings of righteousness, wear the marriage robe of the Redeemer, and become a citizen of the New Jerusalem? Does not thy Father await thy return? Are not all things ready for thy reception? Fool that thou art, why dost thou linger in the home of

death? Wilt thou cherish in thy bosom the worm that never dieth? Wilt thou add fuel to the fire that is never quenched? Wilt thou inspire with joy the breasts of the miserable in woe? How great a cloud of witnesses gather around thee, and drop tears of compassion into thy footsteps, as thou art hurrying down the steep of destruction? Seest thou not yon dark dismal cloud which lies before thee? Dost thou not hear the wail of lost multitudes, the voices of despair, and the groans of the miserable, as they issue from yon lurid darkness? Retrace thy steps, thou chief of maniacs. Listen to thy Father's call:—"Turn thee, turn thee, why wilt thou die?" "Draw near to me, and I will draw near to thee." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "The Lord, the Lord, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth." "If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God to observe and do all his commandments, all these blessings shall come on thee and overtake thee." "Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be, when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be, when thou goest out. The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy store-houses, and in all that thou settest thy hand unto: and he shall bless the land which he hath given thee." "The Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground." "He shall open unto thee his good treasures: the heavens shall

give rain in its season, and he shall bless all the work of thy hand." But mark, dear reader, if, perchance, thou be a wanderer of the night, and far away from thy Father's love, glorying in thine ungodly and shameful career, hear, I beseech thee, what the Lord says:—"But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shalt thou be in thy basket and thy store. Cursed shalt thou be in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be, when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be, when thou goest out. The Lord shall send upon thee, cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thy hand unto to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings." "The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, and smite thee with a consumption, and with fever, and an inflammation, and an extreme burning," "and with blasting, and with mildew." "He shall smite thee with madness, and astonishment of heart." "Thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore and no man shall save thee."

These are the words of Him who cannot lie, who is the Faithful and the True, even the Almighty. He has set before thee life and death, blessing and cursing; and he now calls upon thee, dear reader, if thou be a wanderer, to make thy choice. Decide now, even just now. Wait not till tomorrow's sun. Think not for a moment of waiting for a more convenient season. Is it not saying in presumptive phrase, I care not for God's time; I will study mine own

conveniency? Bold sinner! wouldst thou thus insult thy Maker, and again launch thy feeble bark on a sea exposed to rocks, and shoals, and destroyiug storms? But though thou shouldst surmount even all these and many others, wouldst thou be nearer the heaven of conveniency than before? Having sported in holiday attire, the follies, vanities, and vices, of the world, until thou hast become the very impersonation of the devil, the world, and the flesh, dost thou imagine that, when thus enrobed, the convenient time will have arrived? Will thy heart then be more susceptible of the heavenly truth? Hear me, thou son of the convenient season, "Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption." Say not in thine heart, "There is time enough; for I am yet in the strength and beauty of my years; and the dream of earthly glory with a countless multitude of mysterious joys and pleasures, are all in perspective before me." Knowest thou not, that thou art really saying in thy heart, thou wilt never return to thy discarded, but merciful and gracious Father? Art thou not grieving the Holy Spirit by thy disobedience? May the Lord not say to thee as he said to the Antediluvians,—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man." And what then? Thy return, even thy salvation, will become an impossibility. The heavens above thee will then be clothed in darkness; and the shadows of the second death shall fall upon thee. Hear the word of the Lord:—"I have called, and ye refused: I have stretched out my hand, and ye regarded it not: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and ye would have none of my reproof: I will also laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as a desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and

anguish cometh upon you; then shall ye call upon me, but I will not answer: ye shall seek me early, but ye shall not find me: for ye hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: ye would have none of my counsel: ye despised all my reproof. Therefore shall ye eat of the fruit of your own way, and be filled with your own devices. For your turning away shall slay you; and your prosperity shall destroy you." Such will be the end of the children of a convenient season.

On the other hand, how different is it, even in this world, with the people of God. They have nothing to fear. No curse comes near their dwelling. All the blessings are theirs. All the promises are theirs. Their well-established trust in God through Christ, that goodness and mercy shall follow them all the days of their life, is a constant source of peace to their minds. The dark cloud, appearing in the distant sky, foreboding the coming storm, awakens no fear, neither disturbs the peace of their souls. That hand which directs the tempest is to them a hand of "goodness and mercy." They dwell in the secret place of the Most High, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. They say of the Lord, "He is our refuge and our fortress, our God: in him will we trust. Surely he shall deliver us from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover us with his feathers, and under his wings shall we trust: his truth shall be our shield and buckler. We shall not be afraid of the terror of night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness: nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday." "Because we have made the Lord who is our refuge, even the Most High, our habitation." "He is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." "God is in our midst; we shall not be moved."

But should the goodness and mercy of God assume a corrective form, and put on the aspect of apparent ill, they who have come to their Father and found peace, know that the change of scene is but another mode of his love. This belief in the goodness and mercy of God, when exposed to the trials of life, inspires them with patience, and peace, and joy. To them these are the medicines of life, which remove the disease of indwelling death. To them these are the cleansing waters that purify the inner man, and make him a fit temple for the Holy Spirit. To them these are but the ministers of God, pulling down the old house, and building a beautiful palace to the King of kings. To them these are but the winds which are wafting their feeble bark to the shores of everlasting peace and joy. To them these are but the schoolmasters which teach, and train, and develop them for the kingdom of heaven. Soldier of the Cross, be not dismayed. He that is with you is greater than all that are against you. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication."

CHAPTER III.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE CONTINUING COMFORT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD IN REMOVING THE FEAR OF DEATH.

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

GOD has clothed Death in robes of terror for good and wise ends. Had the Destroyer been robed in attractive attire; had his appearance been full of youth and beauty; had all his movements shone with heavenly grace; and had his countenance been the expression of peace and joy, the tie which binds man to this life would have been snapped asunder by every petty trial and disappointment. Even as it is, even with all the alarm which he inspires, how many cut short the natural term of life, either by intemperance, by criminal deeds, by poison, or by a watery grave. How many thousands in the course of time have deserted the standard of life, and rushed into the presence of the Judge of all! Every year tells it melancholy tale. Scarcely is there an issue of the Press which fails to record some instance of self-destruction. Hardly is there a village or town in our isle that cannot bear witness of suicidal crime. If so, has God not shown both wisdom and goodness in thus clothing the King of Terrors? Death is the sentinel which he has placed on the shores of time, to

prevent men from deserting the post that his good providence has assigned them. When man becomes weary of life, when its troubles and cares gather around him; when he takes the wings of the morning and flies to the banks of the dark Jordan, Death confronts him, and drives him back to his post of duty. Should the pale hand of disease be laid upon him, foreboding the approach of the last foe, he spares no means within his power to avoid a conflict with the Great Enemy. To accomplish this end, he parts with the gains of years, with the rich treasures of his ancestors; sails through stormy seas, travels distant lands, consults many physicians, and undergoes varied forms of trial. The fear which death inspires makes men good stewards of the body, in causing them to seek those aids that are best fitted for its preservation. Neither is its moral influence on character small. It often checks men on their downward course of sensuality. How many by luxury, intemperance, and other irregularities, have brought themselves to the very gates of death; and, feeling alarmed, have retraced their steps, and led a sober and virtuous life! It likewise exercises an influence even on our social and sympathetic nature. Most persons in the course of life have felt this. Does the prospect of death not humble our pride, and bring out the better feelings of the heart? Walk through a churchyard and survey the memorials of the dead. The "small and the great" are there. Death knows no distinction of rank in his gloomy empire. Here the rich man cannot boast of his riches, nor the learned of his lore. Here the prince and the peasant have the same resting-place. There are neither crowns nor broad lands in the domain of death. The sword, the sceptre, and the spade can boast no distinction in the valley of shades. Do the heaps of venerable dead flatter our vanity, or stimulate our pride? Do they awaken in us

the feelings of envy, hatred, or revenge? Do they inspire us with a stronger desire for distinction which the world can bestow? Do they create in us ambition, emulation, rivalry, or inordinate desire? By no means; they check the course of human irregularity, elevate the mind, and dispose the heart to virtuous and religious thought. Death is one of God's angel missionaries to man, bearing a gospel of peace, and pointing out with his thin, pale hand the narrow gate which leads to the temple of righteousness. Death is one of God's royal pioneers, whose office is to clear away the rubbish of human folly and vice, and to open up a pathway to the higher and holier sympathies of our nature. When the evening of life steals upon us, when its clouds and shadows eclipse the sunshine of our days, Death, like a kind friend, comes and lays the weary traveller asleep. Is the Divine Father, then, either unmerciful or unwise in sending so dark a messenger into the world? Like all the other arrangements of his providence, the grim spectre bears the stamp of God's own wise and loving heart.

But though death is a good and wise appointment of God, yet there are many in whom it creates such an alarm as to render their lives very unhappy. This fear of the last enemy is not confined only to the poor and the ignorant, but extends to the rich and the learned. It is felt not only by the low, but also by the high in life. Henry Beaufort, a rich cardinal, in the days of Henry the Sixth, perceiving that death was at hand, exclaimed, "Wherefore should I die, being so rich? If the whole realm would save my life, I am able either by policy to get it, or by wealth to buy it. Will not death be bribed? Can money do nothing?"

"When Vitellius, a Roman emperor, and a notorious glutton, who at one supper had before him two thousand

fishes and seven thousand birds, was in prospect of death, he made himself intoxicated, that he might not be sensible of its pains, or of the mighty change which it produced."

"Louis the Eleventh of France was so fearful of death, that as often as it came into his physician's head to threaten him with death, he put money into his hands to pacify him. His physician is said to have gotten from him fifty-five thousand crowns in five months."

To these great ones of the earth, such a state of mind must have been a source of much unhappiness. As often as the dark thought rose up before them, they would be the prey of painful alarm. Like Belshazzar in his palace-hall, in the midst of his ungodly festivities, when the mysterious hand crept forth upon the wall, and filled him with terror, the paleness of death fell upon his cheek. His thoughts became his tormentors. "The joints of his loins were loosed; his knees smote one against another;" and the diadem trembled upon his brow. The fear of the last foe casts a dark shadow over the lives of many of the human family. The changes which take place in passing from time into eternity strike their hearts with terror and awe. The prospect which awaits them at the close of life, when the great enemy shall come forth arrayed in all his terrors, casting the cold damps over the brow, taking the light from the eye, and covering it with a veil of darkness, causing the long labouring heart to cease from its toil—when the rattle of the throat is tolling the knell of their departure—when the struggling gasp for life throws its white foam on the pale lip, and the icy coldness of the grave enshrouds them—fills their whole being with a strong horror, which casts a shadow over much of the sunshine of life. No place, no worldly surroundings, can hide them from the dread spectre. The palace, with all its imposing grandeur

and display, is no more a sanctuary of rest than the cottage with all its unassuming modesty and humility. The lofty tower, with its thick granite walls, can give no more respite from this fear than the lowly wigwam of the wilderness, with all its feebleness. In vain do gold and broad lands, great titles, and imperial power unite their voices and cry aloud and say, Be not afraid, all is well! These, all these, are miserable comforters, unfit to banish the ghastly thought which torments its miserable subject.

But this slavish fear of mere dissolution has not surely such a foundation in fact as to warrant so unhappy a state of mind. It is quite true that death, apart from an hereafter, is to all a solemn thought. It separates us from all that we hold dear in this world. Our connection with time has many tender and pleasing associations which bind our hearts to this life. We seem to become a part of all that we see and love, and when any portion is taken away, we feel as if we had suffered a mutilation of our being, as if the dominion of thought and feeling had suffered a sudden and painful loss. What the mind has been accustomed to contemplate and gaze upon becomes in time its heaven, or, perhaps, its hell. If the objects are of a pleasing and virtuous kind, they will form its paradise; and, on the contrary, if they are of an unpleasing and vicious kind, they will form its region of woe. Such is the law of the Divine Father. To the humble followers of the loving Nazarene, therefore, the separation from much which is grand and beautiful in the world carries with it a painful sense of privation. To gaze no longer on the life-giving sun, setting in all his glory in the western sky; to see no more the evening moon coming forth, in silent majesty, rejoicing in all her loveliness; to see no more the nightly sky, adorned with heavenly gems; to see no more the sweet approach of spring, with its early

flowers, the dewy footsteps of a calm summer's morn, or the ripened beauty of the harvest fields, cannot but cast a shade of sorrow over the reflecting mind. But there is much more than the beauty and the grandeur, displayed in the heaven and the earth, which awakens a feeling of pain in departing from this life. There are dearer thoughts which cluster round the heart, and form the very germ of our earthly satisfaction and joy. God's works in nature are, indeed, all beautiful and interesting, often possessing a mystery of love, dearer than life. To take a last farewell of the scenes of early life, of the varied paths which our boyish steps have trodden, of the hill and the valley on which we have so often gazed, and of the familiar, favourite spots where we have sported our childhood years, to bid a last adieu to all these, is like a desolation of the heart's holiest feelings. To take the last fond look of the wife of our bosom, who has long shared our sorrows and our joys; to close the eye for ever on the husband who has been the stay and comfort of the home; to hear no more at morn and eventide the merry voices of the little ones that have so often delighted us with their innocent sports and prattle; and to give up for all time every idol which has danced around the heart, must overcast our feeble nature with a melancholy gloom.

But such separations, however painful, are not the causes which create the slavish fear of death, and in the prospect of which many are filled with a feeling of horror. Surely there is no foundation in fact to justify such a state of mind. It is mere self-deception to measure the character of death by the measure of our fears. How often are people afraid when, in truth, there is nothing in the object to warrant fear! Such is the fact of every day's experience. Men fear and tremble at spectres of their own creation, and

very often turn the lambs which gamble on life's path into formidable lions. Feeling of any kind is no sure index to the character of an object which may have occasioned it. When the mind is depressed, the world becomes dark and gloomy; and, on the contrary, when it is elevated, it becomes filled with the light of joy. In both instances the world is the same. It is the magic power of the mind which has wrought the apparent change, and which creates to itself a heaven or a hell. Were our feelings of joy or of sorrow, of courage or of fear, the real exponents of the things which gave rise to them, the world would be full of contradictions. No two persons can feel precisely alike; and, probably, few can think exactly alike, on many topics. That horror of the last foe which sheds a gloom over many a life has no proper basis either in reason or in truth. If any one be so foolish and unreasonable as to make his fears and his fancy his interpreters, he will become his worst enemy, even his worst tormentor, and will require neither the devil nor his angels to make him more miserable.

But were this horror of death truly descriptive of its real nature, it would be at variance with the benevolence of God. Divine goodness is confined to no part of creation. Wherever we direct the contemplative eye, we fail not to see its wonderful workings. In the deep sea, in the deeper heavens, in the wide range of earth, God's loving heart is beating through them all. We are conscious of his love in all our sensations. It is felt by the eye which looks abroad on the beautiful works of nature; by the ear, in the sweet strains of music, in the pleasing interchange of thought, in the well-known voices of those who are dear to us. It is felt by the organs of smell, in the fragrance of plants and flowers; by the sense of taste, in all the varieties of food which sustain the body. It is felt also in the exercise of the

intellectual, the moral, and the active powers of our nature. There is a pleasure in judging, reasoning, imagining, and remembering; a pleasure in well-doing, in discharging our duty to God and to man; a pleasure in hoping, trusting, and loving. If God, then, is full of goodness in the various aspects of his love, whether in the world or in the constitution of our nature, can we think that, at the closing scene of life, it can possibly be withdrawn? Can we suppose that his fatherly love accompanies us to the banks of the Jordan, and when we are about to cross the river, something grim and horrible confronts us? At that period of our pilgrimage, when we stand most in need of divine help and sympathy, can we suppose that the Father of all goodness will leave us alone to struggle with an enemy, the embodiment of all that is fearful and alarming? If the benevolent heart of God is seen and felt through all his other works, is it reasonable to conclude that our departing hour will be a solitary exception? If the divine goodness is infinite, can there be any exceptions? Infinity is absolute in its character, and does not admit of any exception. Were there even a single one, infinitude would lose its nature. From what has been said, it may be reasonably concluded that mere natural death, of which many have so great a horror, is, for the most part, if not altogether, but the creation of fear, magnified by imagination. We know too well the workings of these in the occurrences of life; and we often smile at our fears when the object which gave rise to them has passed harmlessly away, as of no importance at all.

But there is no reason that any one should be more alarmed at the prospect of death than at the different stages of disease, infirmity, or old age, which usually leads to it. These are steps in the process of dissolution. The tabernacle of the body does not at once fall in ruins. There is the gradual

failure of some portion of the earthly house. For a longer or shorter time its vital forces may have been giving way, and giving way, too, unconsciously to the individual. And what is this failure of life's power? Is it not incipient death? Is it not the work of the Destroyer begun? Is not each step in the process the real death of some part of the body? and yet the subject of it may not be conscious of the deadly change which is destroying the very foundations of life. Why, then, should any one fear the death of the last slender thread of life in a greater degree than any of the former ones? There is no reason to suppose that there is any more pain, or any more consciousness of the change in the last stroke of death than in each one of those that preceded it. Frequently, if not always, the hottest of the battle is over before the final issue; and the closing scene is only a simple surrender to the enemy. This principle of change, whether it tends to maturity or to decay, is common to all organised beings which inhabit the earth. There are no exceptions. It extends to the prince as well as to the peasant—to the moth as well as to the mammoth—to the cedar of Lebanon as well as to the humblest weed by the wayside. The leaves of the spring and the autumn bear witness of this truth, in their expanding and fading lives. They come forth in the strength and pride of their youth, and they depart in the feebleness and humility of their age. They cheer us when they come; they depress us when they depart. Behold that beautiful rose, hanging its modest head, baptized in the dew of the morning! It looks as fresh and as full of life as if it had just come out of the hand of an angel. It looks as if it had taken a lease of immortality. Fair visitor, now rejoicing in thy summer holiday, more glorious art thou in thine apparel than the boasted Hebrew King in his Eastern attire; and yet the stamp of the Destroyer is on thy brow.

A few weeks more, and the shine of thy glory will be as a remembered dream, which was pleasing and beautiful to the delighted slumberer. Slowly and gently is thy pilgrimage to thy resting-place, as if unwilling to lay aside thy heavenly robes; but the pale hand of the enemy is passing over thee, bathing thy fair form with his deadly dews. Every sunrise bears witness that the pride of thy glory is becoming as the golden shades that yesterday adorned the clouds of the evening. So is it with man. He comes into the world as a flower, comes to maturity, and, after a brief season, gradually begins to decay. The eye, once so bright and clear, loses its brilliancy and power; the ear, which was so susceptible, becomes sluggish and dull; all his senses, once so full of energy and life, and which held so pleasing converse with the world around, lose their accustomed power, and pass into final decay. His perceptions become less clear. His memory fails. His active powers gradually lose their energy. He totters as he moves along, white with the snows of years. His form is thin and shadowy, and, like the waning moon, daily loses the light of life, until the last faint streak disappears in the darkness of death. Each step in the process of these changes is the work of the Spoiler. He does not rudely separate at once the body from the soul: he does it by piecemeal. There is a loving-kindness in the gentle strokes of Death. Usually does he send his messengers before him to warn his victim of his approach, that he may either avoid the shaft, or be prepared to receive it in his heart. He cares not to put the sickle into the harvest-field and gather in the fruits before the time. His mission is a mission of mercy and goodness. And when the waters of life are greatly troubled, and like to overwhelm the soul, he comes to the rescue, and says to them, "Peace, be still!" and there is a great calm.

Why, then, should the *King of Terrors*, clothed in robes of benevolence, and bearing a gospel of mercy, appear to the multitude so formidable? Is he not a messenger of God, sent on an errand of love? In the present order and constitution of things, what would the destinies of man be were there no death? Truly, its misery would be indescribable. Confusion, and anarchy, and despair would fill the earth, and, instead of the beautiful paradise which now is, it would become the veriest hell. Is not death, then, an invaluable boon of Heaven? Has it not freed the world from nameless ills? In the old world, when men counted their ages by centuries, and felt full of energy when the sorrows of five hundred years had passed over them, we are informed by the sacred writer, that violence and criminal deeds, and all manner of wickedness, filled the earth. The heart of man had become so corrupted, "that it was evil, and that continually." In mercy, God opened the windows of heaven, and sent down the waters of death. And the outlaws forgot their violence and iniquity, and slept beneath the calm, still wave.

But why should men be more fearful of the last stroke of death than any of the former ones? The former create little or no alarm, and, in natural death, are, for the most part, scarcely felt even in their consciousness. When one of the petals of life's flower drops softly and gently away, followed by another and another, why should the last solitary one, when it falls peacefully from the bosom of life, awaken so many dark and fearful emotions? There is no more rudeness in the hand of the Spoiler, when he plucks the last leaf of life, than when he takes away the first of the family circle. Throughout, his mode of operation is the same. Even the more vital parts he touches with a lighter hand; and usually towards the close of his work draws over his

victim the veil of unconsciousness. There is a sympathy in Death. How like an affectionate friend sent by a loving God! In mercy and goodness man is born into time; and in mercy and goodness he is born into eternity. From the period of his entrance into the world, until his departure out of it, is but a succession of advancing changes, intended by the Author of his being to purify, elevate, and fill his soul with happiness and joy. Dear reader, could your eye penetrate the mysteries of God; could the design and end of Heaven be revealed to you; and could you see through the veil which hangs over the face of time and eternity, you would behold a beautiful stream of love following you, not only through life, but also through death. You would then, in the joy of your heart, be prepared to say with the Apostle —"O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

But besides the fear which mere material death creates, there is, too frequently, a greater fear of the consequences that follow the entrance into another world. The garments which clothe the outer man may soon be laid aside, and be lodged safely and peacefully in the wardrobe of the grave. But very different is it with the immortal within, when it stands disrobed in the presence of its Maker and Judge. There is a destiny which lies before it, a destiny either of happiness or of misery, of fulness of joy, or fulness of woe. To the ungodly, then, death must be truly alarming. Before them lies a dark, troubled, untrodden unknown. To them there is no light in the valley of shadows. To them there is no gracious Shepherd, no angel messenger, no cloud of happy witnesses ready to receive them into the mansions of bliss. There are no voices of love and joy calling aloud to them, and saying—"Come, ye blessed of our Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you."

To all these they are strangers and foreigners. Standing without the pale of all that is blessed and good, they have nothing before them but the blackness of darkness. Enemies of God, outlaws of heaven, servants of the devil, the world, and the flesh, they, like Cain of old, are ready to exclaim—"Our punishment is greater than we can bear." Let me give two instances of the wretchedness which attend the ungodly at death.

"Mr. Harvey," said a dying man, "the day in which I ought to have worked is over; now I see a horrible night approaching, bringing with it the blackness of darkness for ever! Woe to me! When God called I refused. Now I am in sore anguish: yet this is but the beginning of sorrows. I shall be destroyed with an everlasting destruction."

The following is a painful example of a miserable death:—

"I am lost." Such was the dying and agonising exclamation of a young man who had been expostulated with for neglecting the great and momentous interests of his soul. The faithful man of God, who had warned him to prepare to meet his God, thus speaks of the interview:—"I spent half an hour in reasoning with him. He treated me with great respect, acknowledged the necessity of religion, but suggested a thousand difficulties. I left him with a painful conviction that, amidst all the wonderful workings of a revival at the time in progress, he had succeeded in keeping his conscience asleep. The meeting closed on Sunday night. On Monday morning I found the road alive with the horses and vehicles of the returning multitude. After riding about four miles, I perceived a throng about a farm-house before me. I rode rapidly to it, and learned that a young man had been thrown from his horse, and dangerously injured. On pressing through the crowd to the chamber, where they had laid the sufferer, I found him whom I had

warned so emphatically the day before. He was shockingly injured; and as I passed into the room, a thrill of dismay seemed to pass over him. A physician soon arrived, pronounced the case hopeless, and that he could not survive two hours. Never shall I forget the agonised countenance of the wretched youth when he learned his fate.

"'Must I die?' he exclaimed. 'Is there no hope? Oh! I cannot die, I cannot die.' I endeavoured to direct him to the Cross, and reminded him of the crucified thief. 'Alas!' he replied, 'he never sinned against such as I have abused. What shall I do? Pray for me!—oh, pray for me!'

"We knelt down in the chamber. His agonising groans struck all with horror and confusion. I arose and endeavoured to direct him to the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.

"'It is too late!' he exclaimed; 'oh! what would I not give, had I heeded your warning yesterday; but it is now too late. I am lost!' His parents and sisters soon arrived. The scene which followed is indescribable. The groans of the poor sufferer ended only with his life. He seemed stunned with the terrible summons that came so suddenly, and was unable to command his thoughts sufficiently to pray."

Amongst the children of men hundreds of such examples, though we are ignorant of them, daily occur. The business of this life so engrosses most persons that, in too many instances, the future well-being of the soul is entirely neglected. They seek their immediate, supposed interests and joys, presuming that when they have obtained the object of their ambition, they will then easily gain the heavenly blessedness. Reversing the command of Jesus, they seek first the kingdom of the world and its selfishness,

hoping that the kingdom of heaven will be added to them. If the world has now so much power over them, how much more will that power be when, for many long years, they have been schooled in its various forms of evil. In such circumstances is there any rational hope that they will ever open their hearts, and let the heavenly truth penetrate their souls? Dear reader, if you belong to this deluded class, for the sake of your everlasting bliss, pause, reflect, decide, not to-morrow, but now, even just now. If you cannot decide for Jesus to-day, what reasonable grounds have you that you will decide for him to-morrow? Will your heart be less hard, less worldly, less imbued with the spirit of delay when to-morrow comes? Will your rejection of the Saviour to-day make God more gracious and merciful to-morrow? Will your rebellion to-day either soften your own heart, or make that of God more favourable to-morrow? No; your heart will be harder, and the Sun of righteousness will be further from you. Does not continuance in sin deepen the corruption of the heart, and estrange it more and more from God? Put not off till to-morrow, for it is not yours. Instead of a gift, it may be a judgment, summoning you to appear before the great white throne. Would it be wise, would it not be presumptuous, to take for granted what is not your own? How many of your fellowmen will not see the next sun rise! Thousands, tens of thousands, are dying daily. What security have you that you may not be one of these? Will blooming youth and beauty, riches and high position, vigorous manhood and a powerful arm, superior faculties of mind and extensive knowledge, secure you from the assault of the last foe? Will the bloom of youth and beauty save you? Are not the rich, and the strong, and the great, of all ages and climes, daily passing away? If so, is it not folly to defer till to-morrow what is

your interest, your duty, your safety, to-day? God is calling to you, and saying, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." The still, small voice of conscience is calling to you, and admonishing you to make no delay. In the sincerity of your heart say, with the repentant prodigal, "I will arise, and go to my Father."

But both the fear of mere death, and the fear of passing into another world, may be effectually removed. On the former of these some observations have already been made. But there are other considerations of a religious kind which are specially calculated to remove these two forms of fear. God, who well knows our feeble nature, was not likely, in his revelations, to leave the human family without an antidote to these fears. If he has made provision for the other evils of life, are we to suppose that he has made no provision for what so generally alarms? Is man subject to many forms of painful disease? God has provided as many remedies. Is he exposed to hunger and thirst? He causes the showers to descend, and the earth to bring forth by handfuls. Is he exposed to the colds of winter? He has laid up in the bosom of the earth abundance of fuel to warm him. Does he require apparel to shield him from the inclemency of the weather? There is plenty of animal and vegetable material to clothe him. Do disappointment and misfortune depress him, and cause him to shed the bitter tear of sorrow? There are sympathising friends who share his sorrows and his tears, and relieve the oppression of his heart. Is he anxious to survive the wreck of the body, and to come forth from the ashes of death? God has endowed him with the greatness of immortality. If He spared not his own Son, but gave him up for us all, shall he not with him freely give us all other things? If God has given us the greatest blessing, shall he withhold the

least? If the Faithful and the True so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, surely a love so divinely great must be commensurate with all our wants. If He has made provision for all our other wants, is it at all probable that he has made no provision to meet these two great fears? Were it otherwise, there would be a blank in the measures of divine goodness. But it is not so. "God is love," infinite love. No dark shadows fall through the light of his goodness. In him, there is a fulness, a perfect fulness, which can meet every want, and fill up every avenue of the soul. He says to his faithful ones: "I will make my grace sufficient for you; I will perfect my strength in your weakness." If so, can it be consistent with the character of infinite goodness and mercy to withhold, in the last trying hour, that requisite comfort and sustaining power? True, it may be that some of the children of the kingdom may sometimes feel a transitory fear of meeting the last foe, and that, for the present, they have not that strength calculated to uphold them in that hour; but, on a little consideration, they feel that such a strength is not now required. Believing that all God's promises will be accomplished, they have full confidence in God, that when the hour of their departure comes, he will perfect his strength in their weakness, and enable them triumphantly to say: "O, death! where is thy sting? O, grave! where is thy victory?" Such faith not only overcomes the world, but all the fears which the king of terrors can inspire.

The grand doctrine of a happy immortality, when believed and allowed to produce its proper effects upon the mind and heart, is calculated to remove the fears of death. The declaration of the great truth of the immortality of man was not confined to the gospel of Jesus. Obscure notions of it were formed among the nations of antiquity.

It was common both to the savage and the civilised races of men, who beheld it "as through a glass darkly." This wonderful truth, however, was brought to full light by Jesus in the everlasting gospel, who not only taught it, but exemplified it in rising from the dead and ascending into heaven. "He was the first fruits of those that slept." If so, what have the righteous to fear? There are no enemies in the beautiful land to which they are travelling. There, "the devil, the world, and the flesh" cannot enter. There, all earthly enticements come to a close. There, pride and envy, and rivalry, and ambition, and selfishness, and all misdirected desires, affections, and passions of man, find no room for the sole of their foot. There, "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." There, the slave is no longer the football of his imperious lord, and the voice of the oppressor is heard no more. But these are not all the blessings of a happy immortality. The experiences of earthly joys cannot measure them. They have a length and a breadth, a height and a depth, which the human mind strives in vain to comprehend. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for those who love him." The satisfaction and joy of this life, in its highest and holiest unfoldings, can bear no comparison to that life which the Great Father has prepared for the righteous. Here, riches and honours, and empires are enjoyed but for a very short time, and seldom give that happiness which their votaries expected to receive. There, the mansions of the just, the house not made with hands, the glories of the celestial state, are enjoyed through endless ages, and gives a happiness surpassing all human conception. There, awaiting the people of God, is an inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. There, inscribed on the golden

pages of the Angel of the Covenant is the promise of "a crown of life" to the "faithful unto death." Thus saith the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things." John, the beloved apostle of Jesus, describing the abode of the blest, speaks thus:—

"And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, ... having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; and had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels. . . . . On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the walls thereof. And the city lieth four square, and the length is as large as the breadth; and he measured the city with the reed twelve thousand furlongs. The length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, crysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve

pearls; every several gate was of one pearl; and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple there; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it; and the Lamb is the light thereof. . . . And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there. . . . . And there shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they who are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Such is a picture of the blessed home of the righteous. Before it the most beautiful cities of the world are but as deformities. Its streets of gold, its walls of jasper, its gates of pearl, the city itself of pure gold, and its light the glory of God, surpass all that the human mind ever contemplated. Babylon the great, in the meridian of its splendour, Rome, ancient Rome, in all the pride of its glory, are in comparison with it but as blots on the face of the earth. In the one we perceive the hand of God; in the others the hand of man. The one bears the stamp of heavenly perfection and purity; the others bear the stamp of earthly imperfection and impurity. How permanent the structures of God when compared with those of man! Where are the mighty cities which once gave laws to the world? What are they now? Have they not faded and fallen as dreams of the night? Their glory is now as a forgotten thing, as a worthless weed cast upon the sea-shore. It is not so with the New Jerusalem, the city of the blessed. Its foundations are laid in eternity. Its glory and honour are not measured by earthly empires, but by the ceaseless roll of endless ages. But this rich display of grandeur and greatness is not all. It is but the beautiful casquet of God, made to hold his

precious jewels, the followers of the Lamb. There they are safe under the protection of the Almighty, safe from every ill which can disturb their joys. Far away, indeed, are the miseries and misfortunes of the earthly condition; "for the former things are passed away." In the City of Bliss, the home of purity and love, the Divine Father wipes away every tear from the eye, destroys the power of death, and shuts our for ever all sorrow and crying and sin. The dark clouds of time cast no shadows over the Golden City. As far as the east is from the west, so far is every form of evil removed from its gates of pearl. Within its jasper walls no mother mourns for the loss of her beloved child; no husband for the partner of his joys; and there no wife bewails the loneliness of her widowhood. Old age and decrepitude, pain and disease, poverty and anxiety, misfortune and disappointments, cannot enter the gates of the beautiful City of God.

If, then, such prospects lie before the people of God, they have no reason to fear the king of terrors. The path to the New Jerusalem may, indeed, be sometimes rough and thorny; but more so frequently is the path of poverty, and toil, and earthly ambition. How often is health and happiness, and even life itself, sacrificed in order to attain wealth, and honour, and knowledge, and power! How often have the great ones of the earth waded through seas of blood, and outraged every feeling of humanity, to open their way to a transitory throne. Often has the student of science become pale over the midnight lamp, and fallen a victim at the shrine of his ambitious aims. Thousands, too—yea, tens of thousands—have toiled, and lied, and crept through every miserable quagmire, to obtain the honour and glory of being rich and great in the eyes of their fellow-men. Are these, all these, easy paths in which to tread? Are they not hard

and dangerous to both body and soul? And for what is all this eagerness, this madness of pursuit? Is it for something which shall rejoice the heart, and shut out the cares and anxieties of the world—something that shall expand the mind, elevate the thought, and enrich the soul? Ah, no! Too often, if not always, this monomaniac race for what the world accounts so great and precious, hardens and corrupts the heart, fills it with pride, selfishness, and vainglory, and, finally, ends in dissatisfaction. If, then, the votaries of the world can, without any fear, sacrifice health, life, and character for the petty acquirements of a day, why should the children of light, with such a glorious inheritance before them, fear to walk through the valley of the shadow of death? Has the pilgrim of the Cross a thornier path to tread? Is the desire of his heart less precious? Will its attainment be followed with dissatisfaction and disappointment? No, no; it is quite otherwise. The one is but a dream; the other an eternal reality. The path of the worldly is rough and uneven, and full of cares and troubles; the path of the heavenly is strewn with the sweetest flowers, and is as "the shining light." The years of the former close in gloom; the years of the latter, in glory. Instead of alarming fears agitating the believer when in the valley, he is full of hope, and courage, and joy. The Good Shepherd is there with his rod and staff, to give all needed aid to the traveller as he passes through the shadows of the valley.

Such has been the experience of the faithful in all ages of the world. If there is anything which comforts and sustains the heart—if there is anything that can dissipate the fear of the last foe, fill the soul with joy, and awaken a desire to depart, it is the heavenly prospect of the humble follower of the Lamb. What are all earthly prospects in

comparison with it! Riches, and honours, and thrones, when compared with that bright prospect, are but "as the morning cloud and the early dew." Happy the man who can realise it!—happy in working through the trials and troubles of this life!—happier still in walking through the valley of the shadow of death, with the Celestial City before him! He has no fears. On the contrary, his heart overflows with heavenly joy; and, like the Apostle of the Gentiles, his earnest desire is "to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." If David, the Sweet Singer of Israel, with all the disadvantages of the Mosaic dispensation, had no fear in the prospect of entering the valley, ought the follower of Jesus, with all the advantages of the Gospel dispensation, to fear the approach of the messenger that opens the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem? If the one had no fear to walk in the dubious twilight of Moses, ought the other to fear to walk in the meridian light of Jesus? If, in treading the valley, the measure of light is the measure of comfort and joy, that of the latter must surpass the former as much as the light of the sun surpasses the light of the moon. It is the light of God in the soul, which dissipates fear, sustains the heart, and enables it to triumph in the last hour. But where there is no light, the departing spirit is full of alarm, misery, and despair. If so, the follower of Jesus must have, by many degrees, the superiority over the follower of Moses, whether in the prospect or in the reality of meeting the last foe.

It may, perhaps, be now desirable to illustrate this subject by a few Christian examples.

In the early part of the career of the Rev. John Wesley, influenced by a desire to do good, he undertook a voyage to Georgia. During a storm on the voyage, he was very much alarmed by the fear of death, and being a severe judge

of himself, he concluded that he was unfit to die. He observed the lively faith of the Germans, which, in the midst of danger, kept their minds in a state of tranquillity and ease, to which he and the English on board were strangers. While they were singing at the commencement of their service, the sea broke over them, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks, as if the great deep had already swallowed them up. The English screamed terribly, but the Germans calmly continued their singing. Mr. Wesley asked one of them afterwards if he was not afraid. He answered, "I thank God, no." "But were not your women and children afraid?" He replied mildly, "No; our women and children are not afraid to die." Wesley, however, as the light of divine truth gradually penetrated his heart, overcame this slavish fear; and, like the fabled swan, he sang triumphantly in the valley: his last words were—"The best of all is, that God is with us." The Good Shepherd was there with his rod and his staff to comfort him.

Hear the words of another eminent servant of God.

Dr. Payson, when dying, exclaimed, like a warrior returning from the field of triumph, "The battle's fought! the battle's fought! and the victory is won!—the victory is won for ever! The celestial city is full in my view; its glories beam upon me; its breezes fan me; its odours are wafted to me; its music strikes upon mine ear; and its spirit breathes into my heart. I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun, exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering with unutterable wonder why God should shine thus upon a sinful worm."

Was the departure of this good man accompanied with fear? By no means. He passed through the valley as a

triumphant, conquering hero. He almost trembled, not at death, not at his grim countenance, but at the excessive brightness and glory of the New Jerusalem.

Howard, the philanthropist, an honour to the human race, "breathed his last sigh far from his country and his home, declaring that death had no fears for him."

"The Rev. W. Janeway, when departing, said to his son, 'That fit of weeping in which you saw me was a fit of overpowering love and joy. Had that joy been greater, I question whether I could have borne it, whether it would not have separated soul and body. My heart is brimful; I can hold no more. I bless God I can die.' The dying experience of the Rev. John Janeway, the son of the above, is so strikingly similar to that of his father, that we cannot forbear to record it in this place. 'Surely this,' said he, 'is akin to heaven. If this be dying, dying is sweet. Let no true Christian ever be afraid of dying. I have what my soul desires on earth. I want but one thing, and that is a speedy lift to heaven. I expect no more here; I cannot desire more; I cannot bear more. Hallelujah! hallelujah!'"

When Philip Jenks was on his death-bed, one standing by him said, "How hard it is to die!" "Oh, no, no! Easy dying, blessed dying, glorious dying! I have experienced more happiness in dying two hours this day than in my whole life. It is worth a whole life to have such an end as this."

On board of an East Indiaman was a pious boatswain, whom, on this account, the crew looked upon as a strange man. The ship was overtaken by a storm so dreadful, that after every effort had been made to preserve life, the captain said, "All that could be done, had been done; it was impossible the vessel could weather it." The ship seemed

sinking; the captain withdrew into his cabin. Some of the men were on their knees; others, with horror, were hanging on parts of the rigging. All expected the vessel would founder. The boatswain had been very active, and appeared to have no fear during the whole gale. At this moment, when a heavy wave struck the ship, and seemed as if it would instantly sink her, looking up with a smile he exclaimed, "Blessed be God! all is right!" and he began to sing. The storm afterwards abated, and the vessel was saved. Thus, amidst the storm of life, on the dark ocean of death, and amidst the terrors of the judgment-day, the Christian may still smile, and exultingly exclaim, "Blessed be God!"

"My first convictions on the subject of religion," says the Rev. R. Cecil, "were confirmed by observing that really religious persons had some solid happiness among them, which I felt the vanities of the world could not give. I shall never forget standing by the bedside of my sick mother. 'Are you afraid to die?' I asked.—'No, no.' 'Why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?'—'Because God has said, Fear not; when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they will not overflow thee. Let me die the death of the righteous!'"

When Polycarp, an ancient bishop of the church at Smyrna, was brought to the tribunal, the proconsul asked him if he was Polycarp; to which he assented. The proconsul then began to exhort him, saying, "Have pity on thine own great age; swear by the fortune of Cæsar; repent; say, Take away the atheists," meaning the Christians. Polycarp, casting his eyes solemnly over the multitude, waving his hand to them, and, looking up to heaven, said, "Take away these atheists," meaning the idolaters around him.

The proconsul still urging him, and saying, "Swear, and I will release thee; reproach Christ," Polycarp said, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath never wronged me; and how can I blaspheme my King who hath saved me?" "I have wild beasts," said the proconsul, "and will expose you to them, unless you repent." "Call them," said the martyr. "I will tame your spirit by fire," said the Roman. "You threaten me," said Polycarp, "with the fire which burns only for a moment, but are yourself ignorant of the fire of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly." Soon afterwards, being about to be put to death, he exclaimed, "O Father of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ! O God of all principalities, and of all creation! I bless thee that thou hast counted me worthy of this day and this hour, to receive my portion in the number of the martyrs, in the cup of Christ." This aged saint, the disciple of John the evangelist, had no fear for death in its most horrible form. To him it was the path to everlasting bliss.

Dr. Stonehouse, who attended Mr. Hervey during his last illness, seeing the difficulty and pain with which he spoke, and, finding by his pulse that his end was approaching, desired that he would spare himself. "No," said he, "doctor, no; you tell me I have but a few minutes to live; O let me spend them in adoring our Great Redeemer. Though my flesh and heart fail me; yet God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." He then expatiated in the most striking manner on these words of Paul, "All things are yours, life and death; things present and things to come; all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." "Here," said he, "is the treasure of a Christian, and a noble treasure it is. *Death is reckoned in this inventory.* How thankful I am for it, as it is the passage through which I get to the Lord and Giver of eternal life! and as it frees

me from all the misery which you see me now endure, and which I am willing to endure as long as God thinks fit; for I know he will by and by, in his good time, dismiss me from the body. These light affections are but for a moment, and then comes an eternal weight of glory. Oh, welcome, welcome death! thou mayest well be reckoned among the treasures of the Christian!" Was death a terror to this eminent Christian? No; to him it was a treasure—to him it was an angel of joy, opening the pearly gate of the New Jerusalem.

The Rev. S. Morell, an excellent young minister, just entering on his work of love, at Norwich, died in the twenty-fourth year of his age. On the last day of his life, he remarked, that he should once more wish to commit his soul to God, and then added, "I should like to understand the secrets of eternity before to-morrow morning." His desire was granted. In his last moments, he indulged in language like this: "None can know, none can conceive the happiness I possess—the peace with which my soul is filled, but the sincere disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ. Redeemer of the world, give me strength to bear even joy—this joy."

"I am not afraid," says John Dodd, "to look death in the face! I can say, Death, where is thy sting? Death cannot hurt me."

And, again, hear what another follower of Christ, Robert Bolton, says—"Oh! when will this good hour come? When shall I be dissolved? When shall I be with Christ?"

"Here," says Halyburton, "is a demonstration of religion, that I, a poor, weak, timorous man, as much afraid of death as any, am now enabled by the power of grace, composedly and with joy, to look death in the face."

"As for my death," says Edward Deering, "I bless God I feel and find so much inward joy and comfort to my soul that, if I were put to my choice whether I would die or live,

I would a thousand times rather choose death than life, if it may stand with the holy will of God."

These are but a few of God's children who have walked through the valley of death and felt no fear. They are but the first stars that come forth and beautify the evening sky. There are others that follow in their train, until they are numbered by thousands and tens of thousands. How many millions of the faithful have walked through the valley in peace and joy, and in obscurity, unknown to fortune and to fame! How many a weary-worn traveller, on his way to the New Jerusalem, has rejoiced with joy unspeakable as he approached the entrance to that valley filled with the shadow of the last foe! Even at this hour in every clime, how many pilgrims, full of peace and joy, are wending their way through its shadows, and entering the gates of the golden city! In that heavenly throng appear the rich and the great, the learned and the unlearned, the peasant and the prince. Here riches, and learning, and honour, and power, cast no flowers in the way, disperse no shadows, and awaken no joy. Earthly distinctions fail to soften the features of the grim foe, or to shed one ray of light in the valley. Here silver and gold, broad lands and mighty empires, yea, the cattle upon ten thousand hills, cannot avail. Here the palatial couch yields no more comfort than the humble pallet of straw. Here the priestly mitre and the kingly crown dissipate no fear, awaken no joy, and ensure no victory. These, all these, are but miserable comforters, glittering toys, the empty baubles of an hour; and, when exposed to the shadows of the valley, become as tow that toucheth the fire. The King of Terrors accepts no bribe, wears no jewels, respects no earthly grandeur or greatness. But in the valley of death, the people of God, under the guidance of the Great Shepherd, are led into green pastures

which enrich and elevate the soul, and drink abundantly of the "still waters" of his refreshing love. They hear the voice of their Beloved saying to them—"Fear not, for I am with thee." "Fear not; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they will not overflow thee: and when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, even thy Saviour." "I will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on me; because he trusteth in me." "The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory." "Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his name." "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," who are called to "the marriage supper of the Lamb." "Behold, God is thy salvation; trust and be not afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is thy strength and thy shield; he also is become thy salvation."

These are voices issuing from the divine heart, and full of comfort and joy to the believer when the hour of his departure is come. He is not left alone in the path that leadeth to the heavenly gateway. The Good Shepherd does not leave his sheep until they are securely lodged in the celestial fold. If his tender care has been over them in life, much more will it be over them in death. God has, in all ages of the world, manifested towards his people unusual grace in their necessities. When the chosen of God left the scenes of their bondage, and, in alarm, stood on the shore of the Red Sea, with a cruel enemy behind, and, to all appearance, a watery grave before them, the Lord in their necessity, in their great emergency, gave unusual aid in

opening up a path through the threatening wave. Had they foreknown this deliverance, would fear for a moment have found a resting-place in their hearts? No; they would have rejoiced, yea triumphed, in their extremity; and instead of fearing the taskmaster and the ominous sea, they would have exulted in the salvation of Jehovah, and in the destruction of their foe. Observe, too, the heavenly aid sent to the outspoken Peter when confined in prison—"Herod the king," says Luke, "stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James, the brother of John, with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. . . . . And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. . . . . And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shone in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands. And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him."

The surroundings of Peter while in prison seemed to

exclude all possibility of escape from the fate which awaited him. Entrusted to four quaternions, who relieved each other every three hours, and to whom it was death should the prisoner escape; and to make his security still more secure, his right hand being chained to the left of the one soldier, and his left to the right of the other, he could not, in such circumstances, have a shadow of hope in shunning the death which awaited him. The vain monarch saw that the death of James had pleased the Jews, and he sought further to increase his popularity in the murder of Peter. Criminal love of fame, seeking the applause of a godless nation through the blood of the holy apostles, the excellent of the earth, lost to all principle and sense of justice, governed only by his selfishness and cruel passions, the worthless king, at the close of the sacred festival, proceeded to bring forth his captive for execution. That very night, meant to be his last on earth, a messenger from heaven, perhaps the angel of Stephen or James, came to him in prison. All the power and precautions of the enemy were at an end. The fetter, the guard, the prison wall, and the iron gate, became as gossamer that float in the air. The wisdom of the wise was turned into foolishness, and the strength of the strong into weakness. For once, the imperial purple paled before the glory of God, and the cell of the martyr was filled with the brightness of heaven. No longer was the apostle the captive of Herod, but the captive of the angel, who led captivity captive, and gave the gift to an ungrateful and unbelieving world. How opportune was the release! How seasonably came the aid of Heaven! Thus plucked by divine power from the jaws of death, and sent forth a free man, he became, once more, the herald of the glorious gospel. In the dark hour, the hour of his extremity, when human hope had ceased to hope, the riches

of divine grace and power brought deliverance and joy. If so, O man of God! why shouldest thou fear to walk through the valley of shadows? Has the arm of the Almighty become weary? Have the rod and the staff of the Good Shepherd, which have so often cheered the pilgrim of the valley, lost their heavenly protection and power? Are they not able to succour thee now in thy march of death? God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The roll of time, with its folly and sin, has cast no blight on the deep sympathies of the Everlasting Father. To his beloved, in their extreme hour, he is ready, even now ready, to disperse the darkness of the valley, and to fill it with the cheering light of heaven. Traveller to Zion, how many beacon lights shine through the plain of God's truth, to dissipate the gloom of thy fear, and to fill thy heart with triumphant joy! How often has the Shepherd of the sheep come to the rescue when no human power could avail! How often has he led them by a way which they knew not, and by paths which to them were unknown! How often did his heart of love protect the pious refugee, when pursued by the envious, malignant Saul! Along the stream of inspiration, how many are the wonders of his love and care when the dark hour gathered over the faithful and true! In their extremity, the slave became free, the weak were made strong, the hungry were filled, and the enemy slept the sleep of death.

But the mysterious aid which God affords his people in the hour of extremity and danger is not confined to the page of inspiration. The Great Father has no favourites, no step-children. He loves even the sons and daughters of wrath, yea, the very chief of sinners. The slave who trembles at the frown of his cruel lord is as dear to the divine heart as was the patriarch, the prophet, or the apostle of revelation.

"It is well known that, in the year 1686, the Duke of Savoy was prevailed on by Louis XIV. to expel the Waldensian Christians from their native valleys. In 1689, eight or nine hundred of these persons, through great difficulties, returned. Mr. Arnauld, their minister and leader, relates that, when they had nearly reached their houses, pursued by a number of their enemies, they were in great danger of dying for want of food. Such, however, was the kindness of God to them that a sudden thaw removed, in one night, a mass of snow from the fields, where they discovered a considerable quantity of wheat standing in the earth, ready for the sickle, that had been suddenly covered with snow, and which now had as unexpectantly left it. On this corn they lived till other sources supplied them with provision."

In the troublesome times God foresaw the necessities of his persecuted ones, and, having made provision for them, folded it up in garments of snow.

"It is related in the memoirs of the celebrated William Whiston, that a Protestant, in the days of Queen Mary, of the name of Barber, was sentenced to be burned. He walked to Smithfield, and was bound to the stake, had the faggots piled around him, and was only waiting for the executioner to apply the torch. At this crisis tidings came of the Queen's death; the officers were compelled to stay proceedings till the pleasure of Elizabeth should be known. Thus the life of the good man was spared, to labour, with some of his descendants, successfully in the service of the Lord Jeaus and his Church."

When the faggot was about to cast forth its tongue of fire and lick up the life-blood of the martyr, how wonderful was the interposition of God, in freeing him from the fowler's snare! Mary, the handmaid of Popish ambition and cruelty, instead of adding another victim to the list of her

murders, was suddenly called before the Judge of all to give an account of the innocent blood which she had so freely shed.

"Nathaniel, an assistant to the Moravian missionaries in Greenland, when engaged in the seal fishery, being in company with another brother, and as yet inexperienced in the management of a kayak (a Greenland boat), met one of the largest kinds of seals, which he killed. He then discovered his companion on a flake of ice, killing another of the same species, and in danger. Thereupon he left his dead seal, kept buoyant by the bladder, and hastened to help his brother. Having succeeded in killing the seal, a strong north wind suddenly arose, and carried off both the kayaks to sea. Neither could they discover any kayaks in the neighbourhood, which could render them assistance. In vain did they cry aloud for help. Meantime the wind arose in strength, carrying both the kayaks, and also the piece of ice, swiftly along with the waves. Having lost sight of the kayaks, they now saw themselves without the least hope of deliverance. Nathaniel continued praying to his Saviour, thinking with great grief of his poor family. He, however, felt a small degree of hope arising in his breast. Unexpectedly, he saw his dead seal floating towards him, and was exceedingly surprised at its approaching him against the wind. It came so near the flake of ice on which they stood, that they could secure it. But how could a dead seal become the means of their deliverance? What was now to be done? All at once Nathaniel resolved, at a venture, to seat himself upon the dead floating seal. By the help of his paddle, which he had happily kept in his hand when he joined his brother on the ice, he went in quest of the kayaks. Though the waves continually overflowed him, yet he kept his seat, made after the

kayaks, and succeeded in overtaking his own. Having crept into it, he went in quest of the other, which he likewise found. He also kept possession of the seal. He then went in search of the flake of ice, on which his companion stood, looking most anxiously for his return. Having reached it, he brought him his kayak, and enabled him to secure the other seal. They then reached home in safety. When relating his dangerous adventure, he ascribed his preservation, not to his own contrivance, but to the mercy of God."

How unlikely are the agencies which God often employs to rescue his people when exposed to danger and death! A seal, a dead seal, mysteriously floating against the wind, approaches the flake of ice on which stood the two fishermen, expecting a watery grave. This providential event became the means of securing, not only the seals and the kayaks, but also of saving their lives.

"During the awful massacre at Paris, by which so many Christians were removed from the present world, the celebrated Moulin crept into an oven, over the mouth of which a spider instantly wove its web; so that when the enemies of the Christians inspected the premises, they passed by the oven, with the remark, that no one could have been there for some days. So easily can the blessed God devise means for the safety of his servants!"

In his wise and good providence, God can make the feeble spider the guardian of the faithful, and the minister of his power.

"Sir Thomas Gresham, who built the Royal Exchange in London, was the son of a poor woman, who, while he was an infant, abandoned him in a field. By the providence of God, however, the chirping of a grasshopper attracted a boy to the spot where the child lay, and by this means his life

was preserved. After Sir Thomas had, by his success as a merchant, risen to the pinnacle of commercial wealth and greatness, he chose a grasshopper for his crest. Under Queen Elizabeth, he became the founder of the Royal Exchange, and placed his crest on several parts of this beautiful edifice. A vane or weathercock, in the figure of a grasshopper, was fixed on the summit of the tower."

The gentle whispering of a tiny grasshopper, in the hand of God, became instrumental in saving the life of this poor, abandoned babe. And the same Divine hand that came to the rescue did not desert the waif of humanity, but raised it to the very summit of merchant greatness.

"During the seventeenth century, while the Rev. John Cotton was minister at Boston, United States, intelligence reached that town of the distress of the poor Christians at Segatea, where a small church existed. In consequence of persecution, its members were reduced to great extremity of suffering. Mr. Cotton immediately began to collect for them, and sent the sum of seven hundred pounds for their relief. It is remarkable that this relief arrived the very day after they had divided their last meal, without any other prospect than that of dying a lingering death. Mr. White, their pastor, had immediately after preached to them from Psalm xxiii. 1, 'The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.' Their extremity was God's opportunity."

"The Rev. Eugenio Kincaid states, that among the first converts in Ava were two men, who had held respectable offices about the palace. Some time after they had been baptized, a neighbour determined to report them to the Government, and drew up a paper, setting forth that the two men had forsaken the customs and religion of their fathers, were worshipping the foreigner's God, and went every Sun-

day to the teacher's house. He presented the paper to the neighbours of the two men, taking their names as witnesses, and saying that he should present the accusation on the next day. The two Christians heard of it, and went to K. in great alarm to consult as to what they should do. They said that if they were accused to Government, the mildest sentence which they could expect would be imprisonment for life, at hard labour, and, perhaps, they would be killed. K. told them that they could not flee from Ava if they would; that he saw nothing which he could do for them; and all they could do was to trust in God. He then knelt with them, and besought God to protect them, and deliver them from the power of their enemies. They also prayed, and soon left K., saying that they felt more calm, and that they could leave the matter with God. That night the prosecutor was attacked by a dreadful disease in the bowels, which so distressed him, that he roared like a madman, and his friends—as is too often the case with the heathen—left him to suffer and die alone. The two Christians whom he would have ruined then went and took care of him till he died, two or three days after his attack. The whole affair was well known in the neighbourhood; and from that time not a dog durst move his tongue against the Christians of Ava. Is there no evidence here of God's interposing in a special manner on behalf of his persecuted and distressed children?"

When the year 1814 began, troops of Swedes, Cossacks, Germans, and Russians, were within half-an-hour's march of the town of Sleswick, and new and fearful reports of the behaviour of the troops were brought from the country every day. There had been a truce, which was to come to an end at midnight of the 5th of January, which was now drawing near.

On the outskirts of the town, on the side where the enemy lay, there was a house standing alone, and in it there was an old pious woman earnestly praying, in the words of an ancient hymn, that God would raise up a wall around them, so that the enemy might fear to attack them.

In the same house dwelt her daughter, a widow; and her grandson, a youth of twenty years. He heard the prayer of his grandmother, and could not restrain himself from saying, that he could not understand how she could ask for a thing so impossible, as that a wall should be built around them, which would keep the enemy away from the house. The old woman, who was now deaf, caused what her grandson said to be explained to her. She, however, answered that she prayed for protection only. She added, "Do you think that if it were the will of God to build a wall around us, it would be impossible to him?"

And now came the dreadful night of the 5th of January; and about midnight the troops began to enter on all sides. The house of which we have been speaking lay close by the road, and was larger than the dwellings near it, which were only very small cottages. Its inhabitants looked out with anxious fear, as parties of the soldiers passed one after another, and even went to the neighbouring houses to ask for what they wanted, but all rode past their dwelling. Throughout the whole day there had been a heavy fall of snow, the first that winter, and towards the evening the storm became violent to a degree seldom known. At length came four parties of Cossacks, who had been hindered by the snow from entering the town, and who came by another road. This part of the outskirts was at some distance from the town itself; and, therefore, they would not go further; so that all the houses around that where the old woman lived, were filled with these soldiers, who quartered them-

selves in them. In several houses, there were fifty or sixty of these savage men. It was a terrible sight for those who dwelt in this part of the town, filled to overflowing with the troops of the army.

But not a single soldier came into the house of the grandmother; and amidst the wild noises and sounds all around, not even a knock was heard at the door. The next morning, as it grew light, they saw the cause. The storm had drifted a mass of snow to such a height between the road and the house, that to approach it was impossible. "Do you not now see, my son," said the old grandmother, "that it was possible for God to raise a wall around us?"

Does not this story remind us of the words—"The angel of the Lord encamps round about them that fear him, and delivereth them"? Does it not seem as if the snow had been gathered together as by angels' hands to form a defence for the house where one dwelt who thus feared God and trusted in him?

"In the number of divine interpretations in answer to prayer," says Le Clerc, "may be placed what happened on the coast of Holland in the year 1672. The Dutch expected an attack from their enemies by sea, and public prayers were ordered for their deliverance. It came to pass that when their enemies waited only for the tide in order to land, the tide was retarded, contrary to its usual course, for twelve hours, so that their enemies were obliged to defer the attempt to another opportunity, which they never found, because a storm arose afterwards, and drove them from the coast."

He who holds the reins of the winds and the tides can make them the ministers of his wrath, or of his mercy, either to protect his people, or to punish his enemies.

"Alexander Peden, a well-known Scotch Covenanter, with some others, had been at one time pursued by horse and foot a considerable way. At last, getting some little height between them and their persecutors, he stood still and said, 'Let us pray here, for if the Lord hear not our prayers and save us, we are all dead men.' He then prayed, saying, 'O Lord, this is the hour and the power of thine enemies; they may not be idle. But hast thou no other work for them than to send them after us? Send them after them to whom thou will gi'e strength to flee, for our strength is gane. Twine them about the hill, O Lord, and cast the lap of thy cloak over puir auld Saunders and these puir things, and save us this ane time, and we will keep it in remembrance, and tell to the commendation of thy guidness, thy pity, and compassion, what thou didst for us at sic a time.' And in this he was heard, for a cloud of mist immediately intervened between them and their persecutors; and, in the meantime, orders came to go in quest of James Renwick."

How the Lord can deliver his people out of the hand of the spoiler, dissipate fear, and fill the heart with gratitude, peace, and joy!

"It is well known that many of the good men who were driven from England to America by persecution in the seventeenth century, had to endure great privations. A numerous party, who came out about 1620, were for a time supplied with food from England, and from the natives of the western wilderness. As these resources were uncertain, they began to cultivate the ground. In the spring of 1623 they planted more corn than ever before; but by the time they had done planting, their food was spent. They daily prayed, 'Give us this day our daily bread,' and in one way or other the prayer was always answered. With a single

boat and fishing-net they caught bass, and when these failed they dug for clams. In the month of June their hopes of a harvest were nearly blasted by a drought, which withered their corn, and made the grass look like hay. All expected to perish with hunger.

"In their distress the pilgrims set apart a day for humiliation and prayer, and continued their worship for eight or nine hours. God heard their prayers, and answered them in a way which excited universal admiration. Although the morning of that day was clear, and the weather very hot and dry during the whole forenoon, yet before night it began to rain, and gentle showers continued to fall for many days, so that the ground became thoroughly soaked, and the drooping crop revived."

These examples, selected from many others, are in themselves interesting, instructive, and encouraging, and show that divine aid is not confined within the pale of inspiration. This is what might be expected. The display of God's power on behalf of his people, as recorded in Scripture, is but the earnest of his love to the faithful in all ages of the world.

If, then, the Divine Father has, in these examples, manifested his power in aiding the pious, what ground of fear, whether in the prospect or in the reality, can any Christian have in walking "through the valley of the shadow of death"? If the Father of mercies can, in a wonderful manner, supply his beloved with food when they are ready to perish; if, by his mysterious providence, he can save them from the terrors of a watery grave; if, in his loving kindness, he can protect them by raising a wall of snow between them and their enemies; if he can "cast the lap of his garment" over them, and deliver them out of the hand of the persecutor; if he can save them from the wrath of a cruel and

bloody queen, even when the faggot was ready to consume them to ashes; yea, if, for a time, he can stay the tide, and let loose the destructive storm when the enemy's ships of war were threatening to destroy them, shall he not then, O man of God, remove all thy fears when thou art walking through the shadows of the last foe? Has the saint of other years been blessed with special divine favours to which the Christian of our times can now lay no claim? Have the treasures of God's goodness and power languished and failed? Has the light of his Fatherly eye suffered a partial eclipse? Do the streams of his merciful and loving heart flow less freely now than in the days of other years? Has the roll of time cast the feebleness of age over the Ancient of Days? Have his deeper sympathies become estranged by the wickedness of man? No, no; the Divine Father "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." That which is eternal is not subject to revolution or change. If the providence and grace of God have been with the believer in the sunshine of life, will they be less with him in the shades of death? If they have been with him in his pilgrimage through the wilderness, will they forsake him at the banks of the Jordan? If, in his heavenly journey, they have enabled him to overcome his foes, will they not enable him to overcome the "last enemy"? The angel bands that have led him from the city of destruction will lead him safely into the golden city, the New Jerusalem. Will the Good Shepherd go into the wilderness in search of the lost sheep, and, having found it, shall he leave it alone in its extremity to contend with the last foe?—on the contrary, will he not rather carry it joyfully into the heavenly fold? Does he not say—"I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee;" "Fear not, for I am with thee;" "My peace I leave with thee;" "My peace I give unto

thee;" "Not as the world giveth give I unto thee;" "Let not thy heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid;" "My rod and my staff they shall comfort thee"? The follower of the lowly Jesus has no cause to fear the shades of the valley, for he knows that he who is with him is greater than all that can be against him. With the grace of God, made sufficient for him, with the golden city beaming before him, and with the angels to carry him to the bosom of his Saviour, he can say, with the pious bard, "Though a host encamp against me, I shall not fear;" "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE EVERLASTING HEAVENLY HOME OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

BELIEF in future good or evil exercises a powerful influence on the present state of man's life. Let any one believe that an evil approaches him, and the result will be the disturbance of his enjoyment. He may be rich and great in the eye of the world, and have all the advantages which the most civilised life can bestow, and yet at the same time he may enjoy little or no peace of mind. Looming in the distance there is a cloud which casts its dark shadows over him and obscures the sunshine of his heart. To him it may appear no larger than a man's hand, hanging on the brow of the distant sky; and yet this speck, so small, so insignificant, can shake the foundations of his worldly peace and joy. He knows not but that dark spot, planted in the blue sky, may grow and bring forth the fruit of the destroying storm. As the invidious Haman had no peace while Mordecai sat at the gate, so with the man who sees an evil before him, he has no peace while the dark spectre sits at the gate of his heart. Restless, fearful, and unhappy, he feels that his wealth, his honours, his worldly grandeur, are all but miserable comforters.

But, take the case of a poor man in the expectation of a handsome fortune coming to him. He may be exposed to many of the ills of life. Poverty and exhausting toil may be his daily companions. Disease may enter his humble cot and rob him of some of his beloved gems. He may see his best laid plans of surmounting the evils of his condition become as an unfruitful fig tree, bearing nothing but leaves. And to add to his misfortunes, he may have the mortification of seeing his acquaintances and his former friends, and even his own relatives, looking upon him with a cold, unsympathising eye. All these trials, however, will be cheerfully borne. He sees that the time is not far distant when he will become the heir of an ample inheritance, which he believes shall free him from the bondage of his present ills. To him even the wilderness with its troubles is patiently—yea, joyously, borne. Before him lies in prospective his earthly Canaan, with all its advantages and pleasurable scenes. Every day brings him nearer to the object of his desire, and gives him a sweeter foretaste of its joys. His thoughts and sympathies dwell there; and, with the eye of faith, his heart has already taken possession of the promised land. He feels as if in a stronghold, and sees the shafts of the world fall harmlessly at his feet.

If the belief in a future good merely of a worldly kind can thus inspire the heart and raise it superior to the trials of life, how much more ought the belief in the greatest good, the heavenly inheritance, the "dwelling in the house of God for ever," to elevate our thoughts, enrich our hearts, and fill the whole soul with a holy joy! Of these two objects of faith is there any comparison? Is not the one, weighed in the balances with the other, infinitely more precious and glorious? The one is but the tiny weed that withers by the wayside; the other, the lofty banana which flourishes through

ages. The earthly inheritance, how great soever it may be, even when fully realised, seldom gives satisfaction, and often mocks its vain possessor. It is not in the character of an earthly object, however precious or excellent it may be, to meet all the wants of man's nature. His desires are far more expansive than what the world can bestow. Never was there a worldly man who could sit down and say to himself, I have all my heart can desire. Is there not still a blank—yea, many blanks, in the wide circle of his desires? Does he not specially feel the uncertainty even of what he enjoys? The treasures of the world often take the wings of the morning, and fly fast and far away. In an unexpected hour the wasting hand of disease may come and take away all the satisfaction which riches can bestow. Death, too, always uncertain, may come, and then what becomes of the earthly inheritance? Does it continue to bless its possessor? Can he carry it over the boundary line which separates time from eternity? Will the rod and the staff of the Good Shepherd help him to carry it through the valley of the shadow of death? To the pilgrim of the valley, riches and honours and thrones and empires are but as a mockery, and fail to shed one single ray of comfort over the last hour. Often does the remembrance of them appear as a troubled dream of the night, awakening thoughts that distress the mind; for frequently the wealth of the wealthy has been acquired by means which were neither pleasing to God nor honourable to man.

But how different is it with the heavenly inheritance, the "dwelling in the house of God for ever," whether in the prospect or in the reality! The home of the righteous is not subject to change. It is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. Time, which casts its withering power over kingdoms and empires, and all worldly glories, fails to

lay its blighting palm on the "house not made with hands." The footsteps of time cannot enter the pearly gates; neither are they heard in the golden streets of the New Jerusalem. The spirit of decay, even in its most subdued whisperings, is never heard within its jasper walls. God has shut out from the city of his beloved everything that can destroy. There, the desolating storm rages no more; and the angry passions of man have lost their destructive power. There, ambition, anxious and restless, has for ever laid aside its dreams of greatness and guilty eminence. There, envy, hatred, and revenge, the children of "outer darkness," can have no communion with the white-robed sons and daughters of God, who walk in the light of their blessed home. There, the liar and hypocrite, the drunkard and whoremonger, the robber, the murderer, and the worker of iniquity, no more disquiet the children of light. There, all the disturbing elements of the world and the flesh are unknown. In the City of the Blest, the wife no more bewails her widowhood, nor the mother the loss of her beloved child. No mourners, clothed in weeds of woe, are seen walking through the streets of the Golden City. Within its blessed walls, there is no sin, nor sickness, nor sexton, nor grave, nor grand tombstone. In that sanctuary of peace, death has no consecrated ground, sways no sceptre, rears no sculptured memorials. The solemn hearse, moving in melancholy majesty, bearing the symbols and equipage of death, followed by a dark stream of mourners, casts no shadows over the beautiful paradise. There, the tear is changed into a gem of joy; the sigh, into a song of praise; and the voice of sorrow into glad hallelujahs. There, poverty lays aside its rags for a royal robe, its meagre fare for a measureless banquet, its wasting toils and anxieties to join the choir of of angels and the assembly of the First-born. Great, unspeakably great, is the happiness of God's house.

"We may speak of its pathways of gold,
Of its walls deck'd with jewels so rare;
Of its glories and pleasures untold;
But what must it be to be there!"

Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the head or heart of man to know the bliss which God has prepared for the righteous. Were the glories of God's house fully revealed to the believer, the fetters of the flesh which bind him to the earth would at once be snapped asunder. The sight, when disclosed in all its beauty and grandeur, would be of so overpowering a nature as to separate body and soul. God, in his wisdom and love, permits his beloved while on earth to see only through a glass darkly. With the eye of faith, they behold only the dawn of the heavenly glory. The full blaze of celestial joys can be borne only by the angels before the throne, and by the spirits of the just made perfect. The souls of believers—being purified, enlarged, and strengthened—will be made capable not only of bearing, but of enjoying, high displays of Divine glory. The beloved in Jesus, though now the sons and daughters of God, know not "what manner of love the Father" will bestow upon them. As yet, "it doth not appear what they shall be; but they know that when He shall appear, they shall be like him."

Listen to the sweet harp of a daughter of the muses, who tunes its strings to the inquiries of a little boy, sitting beside his mother:—

"I hear thee speak of a Better Land,—
Thou callest its children a happy band;
Mother, oh! where is that radiant shore?
Shall we not seek it, and weep no more?
Is it where the flower of the orange blows,
And the fire-flies glance through the myrtle boughs?
Not there, not there, my child!

"Is it where the feathery palm-trees rise,
And the date grows ripe under sunny skies?
Or 'midst the green islands on glittering seas,
Where fragrant forests perfume the breeze,
And strange bright birds on their starry wings
Bear the rich hues of all glorious things?
Not there, not there, my child!

"Is it far away in some region old,
Where rivers wander o'er sands of gold;
Where the burning rays of the ruby shine,
And the diamond lights up the secret mine,
And the pearl gleams forth from the coral strand:
Is it there, sweet mother, that Better Land?
Not there, not there, my child!

"Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy;
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy;
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair;
For sorrow and death cannot enter there;
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom;
For beyond the clouds and beyond the tomb—
It is there, it is there, my child!"

But to feel the joy and supporting power of the everlasting home, it is necessary to make it the subject of much meditation. Here the thoughts of the believer must constantly recur, and, with the eye of faith, contemplate its excellence and glory: otherwise, its heavenly influences cannot be realised. A worldly man who is poor, and exposed to much trouble and toil, but who, in a few months or years, expects a handsome fortune, will meditate much on the joy which the approaching good shall bestow. In the dark hour, when his heart is failing him, his thoughts will recur to it, and find a pleasing light which shall disperse the blackness that is gathering over him. In short, it will be "a lamp to his feet and a light to his path;" and his heart, like the mariner's needle, will always turn to the pole of his earthly expecta-

tions. So is it, or must it be, with the believing soul. If, however, the light of the New Jerusalem is hidden under a bushel, it will shed over the heart no ray of heavenly joy. The eye of faith and contemplation must never lose sight of the golden city, glowing before it in all its splendour and ceaseless enjoyment. To the believer such a prospective view of glory will enable him to bear with cheerfulness the evils of his earthly condition, to overcome the temptations of the world, to follow the footsteps of his beloved Master, and to feel a desire "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." To him, it will be "a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night." In the sunshine of prosperity it will shade him from the allurements of pride, and vanity, and worldly ambition; and, in the darkness of adversity it will shed a cheerful light over the path of sorrow, and trial, and disappointed hopes. To every faithful one, while on earth, it is a sanctuary of rest, a paradise of joy, a heaven of blessedness, in which his soul delights to dwell. Even here he has a foretaste of the glory of his Father's house; and, with the eye of faith, he associates with the great and good of all time, with angels and archangels, and with cherubim and seraphim, that stand before the throne.

But the joy and supporting power, produced in the heart, by meditating on "the house not made with hands," are not all the fruits which, by the grace of God, grow under the eye of faith. There are much more. Such meditation expands the heart, and promotes all the virtues of the Christian life. This may not, at first sight, appear. It is often said that "evil communications corrupt good manners," or, in other words, by keeping company with sinners, the heart is corrupted. Few will deny the truth of this moral principle. Thousands can bear witness of its truthfulness by tears, by

the loss of character and fortune, and worse than all, by the forebodings of misery in the world of woe. As sure as day follows night, and night follows day, so sure will the fellowship of the ungodly vitiate the heart, and make it bring forth the deeds of an evil life. God knows it, and he knew its dangers, when he forbade the ancient Jew to have intercourse with the idolatrous Canaanite. If, therefore, intercourse with the bad leads to vice, intercourse with the good must lead to virtue. If the heart is capable of receiving evil impressions, it must be capable of receiving good impressions. If, by the influence of ungodly company, the heart becomes wicked, by the influence of godly company the heart must become righteous. Were man's nature capable of evil only, moral obligation would cease. In such a case the power of doing good would be absolutely impossible, and the power of doing evil would be an absolute necessity. If so, all moral responsibility would be at an end; for a man is responsible for what he has, and not for what he has not. If he has not the power of doing good, he is not responsible for good, as he cannot be responsible for a power which he does not possess. And were men necessitated to the doing of evil only, in such cases moral badness or moral goodness could not be predicated of him. The sun does good, but its goodness is not moral goodness, neither is it a moral agent. Its goodness being absolutely necessitated, can lay no claim to moral goodness. Where there is no choice there can be no manifestation, either morally good or morally bad. Hence all absolutely necessitated thought, or feeling, or action, loses the quality which constitutes it either morally good or morally bad. But, apart from such reasoning, we know for a certainty that, by keeping company with the good, both the heart and the life are improved. Every one knows

this who has had the opportunity of associating with the good and the holy, and knows it from the depths of his consciousness. How many have turned from the broad road of vice and irreligion by quitting their evil company, and seeking that of the virtuous and pious! Conscious of the miserable and dangerous path in which they were walking, they have retraced their steps, joined the ranks of the godly, and begun their march to the "better land."

But it may be further observed that it is not the mere bodily presence of the good or the bad with whom we associate, which purifies and corrupts the heart and the life. Apart from thought, or sentiment, or action, the contiguity of man to man is destitute of moral or religious power. Let a man shut his eyes, and go into a company of good or of bad men, who, for the time, remain in perfect silence, the effect produced on his mind will be neither good nor evil. Matter, unaccompanied with moral action, cannot exercise a moral influence on the mind. Moral susceptibilities can be influenced only by moral means. A man may, therefore, become good, or he may become bad, though he should never enter the society of any one. If in private he countenance and foster evil thoughts, assuredly the heart will become corrupt, and the life vicious; and, on the contrary, if he countenance and foster good thoughts, the heart will become pure, and the life virtuous. There are moral and religious susceptibilities with which the Author of our being has endowed the human mind, which, when impressed by moral means, necessarily attune themselves for the time either to that which is good or to that which is bad. This is the law of our inner being, and without it man would be neither the subject of virtue nor of vice, but in this respect be as the beast of the field. In proportion, also, to the good or the evil with which these susceptibilities are im-

pressed, so will be the effect produced on the heart. If the good be of a god-like purity, of a highly ennobling character, its legitimate effects on the heart will be of the same nature. But should the good be of a mere common-place description, its effect will partake of the character of its cause. On the other hand, the same principle is true in all its degrees as regards evil. Let a youth associate with a company of the worst of men, he will, through the course of time, become assimilated to the special forms of their enormous vices. On the other hand, let him associate with those who have gone but a little way in the broad path of evil, he will imbibe less of the poisonous forms of depravity. If so, does it not follow from what has been said, that by meditating on the New Jerusalem, the people of God have not only the greatest joy, and the strongest motives to bear and overcome the trials of the world, but they have the very best means of improving in all the virtues of the Christian life? When, with the eye of faith, they contemplate the beautiful character of the saints in their everlasting home, do they not associate with the purest, the holiest, the most exalted company in the universe? Are not the prophets, and apostles, and martyrs there? Yes, they are there, washed and purified by the Spirit of truth, walking in white attire through the streets of the golden city, wearing their glittering crowns of jewels, and singing—"Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." "Alleluia! salvation, and glory and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments. Alleluia!" Besides the company of the blest, whose triumphant song is like the

voice of many waters, there are higher and holier intelligences which stand nearer to the great white throne. There are the seraphim, whose love, devotion, and obedience burn and glow as the fire, and who, with the speed of the lightning's flash, are ready to fulfil the high commands of their Great King. There, too, are the cherubim, deeply versed in the mysteries of the universe, and in the secrets of its strange destinies, and possessing a power beyond the knowledge of man. Within the celestial home dwell all the riches of divine goodness, all that is perfect in love, perfect in virtue, perfect in holiness, perfect in happiness. Within the pale of that beautiful city, the metropolis of the universe, there are all the means, in the purest and highest degree, calculated to enrich the soul, and make it like that of Jesus. Contemplate, then, this heavenly state, this "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled." Hold fellowship with the greatest and best of earth, who now rejoice in the New Jerusalem. By faith and in spirit have companionship, too, with angelic bands, and with Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life." Such an intercourse with the highest forms of goodness and greatness, cannot fail to expand the mind, and mould the heart and the life for the everlasting home.

"Oh, think of the home over there,
By the side of the river of light,
Where the saints, all immortal and fair,
Are robed in their garments of white.
Over there, over there, oh, think of the home over there.

"Oh, think of the friends over there,
Who before us the journey have trod;
Of the songs that they breathe on the air,
In their home in the palace of God.
Over there, over there, oh, think of the friends over there.

"My Saviour is now over there,
There, my kindred and friends are at rest;
Then, away from my sorrow and care,
Let me fly to the land of the blest.
Over there, over there, my Saviour is now over there.

"I'll soon be at home over there,
For the end of my journey I see;
Many, dear to my heart, over there
Are watching and waiting for me.
Over there, over there, I'll soon be at home over there."

CHAPTER V.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN ASSURANCE OF SALVATION THROUGH THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

"I *will dwell* in the house of the Lord for ever."

A STATE which is safe from evil seems to be the desire of all living creatures. Wherever there is animal life this desire shows itself, whether amongst the tenants of the deep, the light-winged tribes of the air, or those familiar forms which creep or walk on the dry land. All these, when exposed to danger, use in some form what appears to them the means of safety. The fox and the deer, the elephant and the lion, when pursued by the hunter, seek for some shelter where they can be safe from the deadly shaft of their enemy. The monster of the deep, when assailed by man, flees for safety to the secret abyss of waters; and the bird, if followed by the petty tyrant of the air, hurries in alarm to some hiding-place in which it is safe from its destroyer. And man is no exception. When beset with the trials of the world, he anxiously seeks for an asylum in which he can find freedom from his ills. If attacked by disease which threatens to shorten his days, he spares neither trouble nor expense to repel its deadly influence. When poverty lifts her famished hand and points to the cheerless hearth, the beggarly attire, the half-supplied fare, and perhaps, more than all, to the cold looks and

estranged demeanour of those who were once devoted friends, how his heart shrinks and whispers to itself, O that I could take the wings of the morning and fly far away to some sheltering home of safety and be at peace! God has endowed man with a faculty which causes him to seek for safety from danger, and to shun whatever would give him inconveniency or pain. Were it otherwise, he would make no effort to surmount the evils of his earthly condition. In such a state his days would be days of misery. In such a state, progress, if not all progress, whether in body or mind, in science or art, would come to a close. Ignorance and barbarism, like a dark cloud, would cover the face of the earth. The very ills of the human condition are blessings to man, and the means of his improvement and happiness. The path of trial which most men deem unfortunate, and which if possible they would gladly shun, is a path that softens the heart, draws out its better sympathies, forms the character, and leads to virtue and to God. Were there no trial, no evil, no temptation in the world, there would be no effort; and were there no effort, it is difficult to see where there could be moral and intellectual excellence. Thank God that in this life there are trials and evils to overcome. They are the schoolmasters of his wisdom and goodness, guiding the footsteps of the world from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge, from vice to virtue, from misery to happiness. They come forth in disguise, with a cloud upon their brow, yet bearing a message of love, and crying aloud, "Peace on earth, and goodwill towards all men."

But while all men, in some way or other, seek for safety from the ills of this life, how regardless do many appear to seek for safety from the ills of that life which knows no end! Few things are so patent to the eye of the religious observer

as the utter carelessness of most men with regard to their safety in the life beyond time. When the ills of this life confront them, active measures are taken to avoid them and to make preparations even for evils which may never come. Frequently fortunes are made, beautiful edifices built, healthful localities sought out, rich and powerful relationships formed, and every mode of security is adopted to shun the evils of this world, while no effort is made to escape the evils of the world to come. Strange contradiction! as if these preparations bore upon their bosom a perfect immunity from future woe, or as if the teachings of the loving Saviour were but a dream of the night. Why such inconsistency? If effort and preparation are made to meet the evils of this world, ought not effort and preparation to be made to meet the greater evils of another world? Can all the benefits which time can bestow be a compensation for the loss of everlasting bliss? Are three-score and ten years of earthly gratification and pleasure more precious than an eternity of heavenly satisfaction and joy? Can the riches and honours of this changing wilderness be put in balance with the riches and honours of the unchanging Canaan? If most men, then, anxiously seek for safety from the evils of the present life, why should they not more anxiously seek for safety from the greater evils of the future life? Is it unbelief, undue attachment to the things of this world, or is it some kind of moral and intellectual infatuation, which causes so many practically to regard the life to come as if it were a fable, a dream, a lie? O foolish and ungodly man! How long shall the voice of God in thy conscience cry aloud, and say, "Turn thee, turn thee, why wilt thou die? How long shall the loving Saviour weep over the hardness of thy heart as thou art rushing down the steeps of the broad road, paved with its millions of dead! How

long shall the agonies of Gethsemane bewail thy lost and miserable condition! How long shalt thou grieve by thine unbelief the Spirit of God, who stands knocking at the door of thy heart and desires to breathe into it the breath of everlasting life! How long shall Calvary lift its voice from afar and tell thee of that love which was stronger than death! How long shall that great cloud of witnesses, the spirits of martyred saints, behold with astonishment thy dark career of madness and death! How long shall the experience of Dives and the miserable wail of the lost admonish thee as thou art hurrying down to the abodes of a night that knows no dawn!

But we would ask here, Can the believer, while in this life, have assurance of safety from the evils of that life which is to come? Many, perhaps, may think that this is an idle question. It is not so. On this point of doctrine the followers of Christ are not agreed. Some of them believe that assurance of salvation cannot be attained in this life, while others are of an opposite opinion. Dr. Hill, Principal of St. Mary's College, St. Andrews, in his lectures on Divinity, says, "The Church of Rome deny that it is possible for any man in a state of trial to attain this assurance; and they build some of the most gainful parts of their traffic upon perpetual doubt and uncertainty with regard to our final condition, which they profess in some degree to remove by the prayers of the Church, the merits of saints and martyrs, and the absolution which priests pronounce in the name of God.

"The Arminians, who do not ascribe the salvation of men to the infallible, effectual operation of the Spirit of God, but consider it at all times suspended upon the co-operation of the human will, do not suppose it possible for any man to attain a greater certainty of salvation than this, that if he

persists in faith he shall be saved. It is the character of fanaticism to resolve this assurance into an impression immediately made by the Spirit of God on the mind, overpowering the reason of man, and independent of his exertions. But the Calvinists conceive that an assurance with regard to his final condition very far beyond conjecture, or probable conclusion, may be attained by a Christian without any special revelation, in a manner consistent with the full exercise of his rational powers. In forming this conception, they are accustomed to distinguish between the direct and the reflex act of faith. By the direct act of faith they mean that cordial acceptance of the method of deliverance prepared in the gospel, by which the believer rests in the merits of Christ for salvation; by the reflex act of faith, the consciousness of the direct act, the knowledge which he has that he believes, by which consciousness he is enabled to reason in this manner: The Scriptures declare that whosoever believes in Christ shall obtain everlasting life; but I know that I believe in Christ; therefore, I know that I shall obtain through him everlasting life.

"The reflex act of faith, being subsequent to the direct act, is not essential to it; in other words, a person may believe in Christ, and may be justified by his faith, before he obtains the assurance of his being in a justified state."

This extract, which has been introduced here, is mainly to show, that professing Christians, while in this world, are not agreed as regards the assurance of salvation. The doctrine which teaches that a man does not know when he is in a saved state, appears at variance with the spirit of the gospel and the plain declarations of Scripture. The gospel means good news, or, as announced by the angel in Luke, "good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." But if the follower of Jesus cannot know whether

he is in a saved or an unsaved state, it is not easy to see that to him the gospel could be "good tidings of great joy." Any communication which produces in us a state of uncertainty as regards our future weal or woe, can have in it but little of the tidings of joy. The murderer, immured in his cell, may be in doubt whether life or death is awaiting him. He has no certainty whether the scaffold or penal servitude shall be his destiny. In the gloom of his prison, hope may sometimes shed over his heart some feeble rays of comfort, and give him a momentary joy. Again and again comfort may be changed into misery, joy into tears of sorrow, and the sweet sunshine of hope into the darkness of despair. One hour sees him lifted up to heaven; another hour sees him sunk down to hell. To-day he is with the angels; to-morrow, he is with the demons. Tossed to and fro in a sea of hope and despair, such a one cannot be otherwise than unhappy. Can it be different with the religious professor who knows not whether he is to be lost or saved, whether he will hold fellowship with the blessed in heaven, or with the damned in hell? Can there be, in this world, any state of mind more conceivably miserable than that which is fluctuating between hope and despair? If such could possibly be the result of the blessed gospel, happier, thrice happier, would it be for the believer never to have known the heavenly intelligence, for then he could have passed the years of his pilgrimage in peace, undisturbed by the prospects of the future life. But it cannot be. Surely the highest expression of God's love, through his dear Son, was never designed to make man more miserable, while passing through the valley of time. No, no; on the contrary, the blessed gospel, when understood and cordially accepted, gives peace to the soul, and fills it with joy unspeakable and full of glory. It is God's loving

message to man, calling upon him to accept it, and rejoice; and instead of making him more miserable, it lifts its heavenly voice, and affectionately says to all: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavily laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Cast your burden upon the Lord," ye who are laden with sorrow aud suffering, "for he careth for you." "He that believeth in the Son *hath everlasting* life," and is in possession now, even just now, of the heavenly treasure, "the pearl of great price." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself it fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

These passages, with many others, evidently show that any one may know whether he is in a saved or an unsaved state. Again and again, God commands, entreats, and beseeches the wanderer to believe, to eat, to buy wine and milk, to take of the water of life freely, that he may enjoy the heavenly rest, have possession of everlasting life, and that his soul may delight itself in fatness. Can the re-

penting sinner savingly believe, and yet be ignorant of this great change? Can he come to the blessed Saviour, and take of the water of life, and yet not know of it? Can his soul delight itself in the fatness of the gospel, and yet be unhappy, not knowing whether heaven or hell is to be its portion? Were it so, it would be at variance with the facts of his own consciousness, and stultify both the command and the consequent blessing of heavenly rest and joy. No one can believe a truth, and yet be unconscious of it. No one can be born again, or pass from darkness to light, and yet be unconscious of the change. No one can have delight in the fatness of gospel truth, and yet be unconscious of that delight. And no one can obey a command, or comply with an invitation, did he not know when he obeyed that command, or complied with that invitation. Obedience to a command implies the power, either directly or indirectly, of obeying it, and the knowledge of having obeyed it, and without which there could be no obedience. In the verse which heads this chapter, David confidently says, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." No uncertainty, no distressing doubt, no wavering between hope and despair, disturbed the harmony of his soul. To him the future life had no fears. From the depth of his heart, from his confidence in God, his life could give expression to the blessed thought, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." He knew that the Lord was his shepherd, who had led him into the rich pastures of his love, and by the still, sweet waters of a heavenly peace. To him, the valley of death was but a beautiful wardrobe in which to hang his fleshly robes, while his spirit, freed from the encumbrance, bounded away to the bosom of his God and Saviour. If, therefore, under Mosaic shadowy forms, the burdensome rites and ceremonies of Judaism, the Sweet Singer of Israel

could have confidence in a home in heaven, how much more so, under the meridian light of Jesus and the blessed simplicity of the gospel, must the disciple of the Cross find an abundant peace and joy to his soul. Did the pious Jew find more of divine mercy in the thunders of Sinai than the pious Gentile in the voices of Calvary? Is there more of God's love in the tempest than in the tender and affectionate appeals of the Redeemer? Has the gospel of Jesus less of saving power than the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer? Can the follower of Moses have a pleasing hope of heaven through the shadow, and the follower of Jesus only a painful uncertainty through the substance? Surely the Sun of Righteousness, that shed his heavenly light on the hillsides of Judea, has not suffered so dim an eclipse as to cause the pious traveller to be in doubt as to his way, whether it will end in happiness or in woe. Were it so, "the good tidings of great joy" would be tidings of painful and distressing anxiety, and instead of being a comfort and support in the journey of life, would become a fruitful source of the most gloomy forebodings. But it is not so. The converts of primitive times bear witness that it is not so. The conversions recorded in the New Covenant testify that it is not so. Behold a stranger of high rank riding in his chariot, perhaps a pious Jew, returning from a grand festival at Jerusalem, reading or probably chanting the 53rd chapter of Isaiah! Pursuing his way towards his Ethiopian home, he is met by Philip, a deacon and an evangelist of the Church, who, under the direction of Heaven, draws near the distinguished traveller, and asks the question, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" "How can I, except some one guide me," is the meek reply. Being invited into the chariot, Philip improves his opportunity, and changes the believer in the law into a believer in the gospel. Being bap-

tized, he proceeds on his way, neither doubting nor fearing nor despairing, but, on the contrary, believing and hoping and rejoicing. Was it different with the jailer of Phillippi? Conscience-stricken and alarmed, he came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" The way to peace with God is at once made known, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Obedient to the command, both the turnkey and all his house believed and were baptized, and rejoiced. No dark doubt of their salvation disturbed their minds and made them unhappy. They knew that they were saved. They knew that they had stepped across the chasm of death, and were standing on heavenly ground; and they "rejoiced." Was it otherwise with the kind-hearted Lydia of Thyatira, "a seller of purple, whose heart the Lord had opened"? Were pious Lydia and her beloved household filled with doubt and fear, when they believed and were baptized? Had the fair merchant and her family less joy in believing the gospel, than the rude turnkey at Philippi? Did not the power of the truth soften their hearts, and bring out the feelings of their better nature? The gentle dealer in purple robes "constrained" the messengers of peace to abide with her; and the rough jailer washed the wounds of Paul and Silas, and set meat before them. In the 8th chapter of the Acts, we also learn that "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ to the people"; and, as a consequence, "there was *great joy in that city*." On the day of Pentecost, we are likewise informed, that three thousand "*gladly received the word*." They repented, they believed, they were baptized, and were added to the church. This *gladness* of the multitude, and that *great joy* in *the city*, were the legitimate effects of the good tidings which they had received. The one was filled with *gladness*, the

other with *great joy;* because they knew that they had passed from darkness to light—from the service of sin to the service of God. They knew that they were saved. And time would fail to tell of the tens of thousands who have repented and believed, and found peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and who are now, even now, rejoicing in the hope of a blessed immortality.

But while all men, without exception, seek for safety in some way or other from the evils of this life, can the same all without exception find safety from the evils of the life which is to come? Is there a message of love, a message of mercy—is there "good tidings of great joy" to every one of the human family? The character of God and the teachings of Scripture go to prove that there is a message of love for the whole human family. The character of God, as acknowledged by the followers of Jesus, seems to favour the idea that there is a message of salvation to all, without exception. "God is love," says John, as if He were a pure embodiment of that blessed state of mind. In his Christian experience, in his observation of God's works, and in his assurance of a happy immortality, he felt that the Great Father was love, infinite love. Everywhere, indeed, can the eye of intelligence discover the loving-kindness of the All-wise Creator. All our senses, sources of enjoyment, and safeguards against evil, were formed by the hand of Divine love. The eye and the ear, the taste, the touch, and the sense of smell, are channels of knowledge and enjoyment. How many grand and beautiful scenes in nature delight the contemplative eye! It is pleasing to behold the faces of our fellow-men, especially of friends and acquaintances, of those whom we have long loved, who are near and dear to us by many affectionate ties. It is both pleasing and pensive to behold the scenes of boyhood years—to look again at

the hill, the valley, the clear lake, the winding stream, or the purling brook, when young life seemed as a beautiful dream. It is pleasing to gaze at the hoary mountain which has stood the storms of nameless years, or the grandeur of the great sea, as it were the eye of God, or the majesty of the starry sky, with its endless display of systems and suns. It is pleasing to behold the tender flower, woven perhaps by the skilful hand of an angel to delight some wandering eye, shedding its sweetness by the wayside, or cherished in the window-sill with a mother's care.

But besides the pleasures of the eye, there are also the pleasures of the ear. In its range the eye is the most Godlike of all the senses; and, as to its usefulness and enjoyment, is by far the most excellent. The ear, however, has its own peculiar field of pleasure to which the eye cannot extend. The eye cannot hear, neither can the ear see. God has given to each its sphere of enjoyment. To the ear he has affixed the advantages and pleasures of sound; and without which social converse, eloquence, and the inspiring strains of music, would have been unknown. Pleasant, indeed, is the interchange of thought and sentiment, whether by the cottage fire, in the well-furnished parlour, the spacious drawing-room, or the palatial hall, when kindred spirits meet to enjoy the socialities of life. It is pleasant, instructive, and edifying to listen to the persuasive voice of the heaven-gifted orator, as he exposes error, establishes truth, and leads his audience to the practice of the true, the good, and the beautiful. Neither is it less delightful to feel the sweet inspirations of music, purifying, elevating, and ennobling our whole nature, and giving us, it may be, a gentle foretaste of "joys unspeakable and full of glory."

But in addition there are the pleasures of smell, and taste, and touch. These are less pure and expansive in their

range, and partake more of the grossness of our earthly condition. The sense of smell enables us to shun whatever is offensive and noisome, and opens a wide field of the most pleasing odours. God in his love has scattered over the face of the earth an endless variety of flowers, which arrest and please not only the eye, but delight the sense of smell. Had each herb or flower breathed the same delicious odour, still this monotony of smell would have been expressive of the goodness ot God. But it is not so. Everywhere there is diversity and attractive change. The loving Father opens his house liberally, and gives; and when he gives, he gives like the King of kings—he gives like a God.

But there are likewise the pleasures of taste. This sense, unlike the former, cannot converse with its objects at a distance. It seems to have in it less of the divinity, partaking more of the grossness of our animal nature. Of all the senses is this one the most frequently abused; an abuse which produces a train of bodily ills, and makes it unfit to enter the pure services of God. Could the body be sustained by gratifying the eye with beautiful landscapes, or the ear with pleasing music, in such a case man would be in all his activities much more spiritual and intellectual. But when the soul is unclothed, or when this mortal hath put on immortality, the sight of God's wonderful works, and the sweet music of the saints in light, will be abundantly sufficient to nourish and strengthen the glorified man. Though here we are candidates for heaven, yet we are of the earth earthy. God has seen it good and wise to endow us with the sense of taste, that, in our earthy condition, we might enjoy the gifts of his gracious providence. Wide is the field which he has opened up for the gratification of taste. How many and varied are the fruits of the earth, and how well adapted in their nature to please and delight the sense of taste!

Had our Divine Father been indifferent to our joys, the food which we eat and the luxuries that we enjoy, instead of being a source of pleasure, might have been a source of pain. Here the wisdom and goodness of the Creator are largely shown in the pleasing and beautiful relation which exists between the organ and the objects of taste. What mind can be so dark as not to discover in this arrangement the loving-kindness of God to man? The world, indeed, might have lived, and moved, and breathed, and passed its years of pilgrimage in comparative enjoyment, and have been devoid of this sense, or been a stranger to its peculiar pleasures. Behold the goodness of God in opening up this beautiful paradise of enjoyment! The earth, the air, and the sea, his great storehouses, are filled with everything which can gratify and delight the taste. The fish, the fowl, the varied fruits of the earth, with many of its creeping forms, are all fitted to awaken in this sense a pleasing enjoyment.

Besides these four sources of pleasure, there is another—the sense of touch. This one, though closely joined to the former, is perfectly distinct from it in its character. We cannot taste without touch. Taste must first come through the sense of touch. The objects of the one must travel through the other before reaching its destination. These, though they stand in so close a relation to each other, are as different in their sensations as seeing and hearing. The sense of touch, however, does not occupy so wide a field of pleasure as that of taste. It is more monotonous in its nature, and is more characteristic of the useful than the pleasant. Unlike all the other senses, it is not confined to any particular part of the body, but extends over its whole surface. Were it confined to the head, like the other senses, it would not serve the design for which it was given.

To meet the wants of the human condition, it was necessary that the whole body should be clothed with this sense. Destitute of these, there could have been no sensation of heat, or of cold, of wounds, or of painful diseases. The fire might have consumed us, or the cold might have frozen us, and yet we might have been ignorant of our danger. Without the warning voice of this sense, wounds, and bruises, and diseases might be neglected, until they overstepped the boundary of all remedies. This sense, appointed by God, stands as a sentinel on the shore of danger, and warns us of approaching evil, saying to us, "Hither shalt thou come and no farther." This gift, the gift of touch, therefore, abundantly shows us the wonderful goodness and fatherly care of our Creator. All our senses, indeed, when in exercise, without exception, speak plainly enough, and say that "God is love."

But His loving-kindness is shown, not only in the five senses, but likewise in all the operations of the mind. The instincts, the desires, the affections, the passions, and dispositions, when under proper regulation, are all fitted to give enjoyment. The memory, the judgment, the reason, the imagination, the conscience, the will, and our religious capability, have each of them its respective field of pleasure. It is true, however, that the abuse of some of these, if not all of them, may be followed by pain. Such pain is only another form of God's goodness and care. In his love he corrects as a wise and tender father, that he may prevent us from walking in the path of destruction. Were there no pain, his goodness and fatherly care would be incomplete. Pain is the voice of his love in our nature, telling us that we have broken his law, and that should we continue to disobey, a heavier affliction shall befall us. And, moreover, did pain not exist, we could not have enjoyed to the same

degree those pleasures which his goodness has associated with our nature. How wonderful the wisdom and loving-kindness of the Great Father in the constitution of man!

If God, then, has enriched our whole humanity with so much enjoyment, it would scarcely be consistent with the character of his earthly love to confine his message of mercy, "the good tidings of great joy," to a certain number of the human family. If, in earthly things, the goodness of God is shown to all his rational creatures in the most minute and abundant manner, can we suppose that in heavenly things the divine heart becomes chilled, and that God has no gospel message to a large portion of our fellow-men? Can he send a part, perhaps a large part, of mankind into the world, and clothe them with his providential love, and yet have in preparation for them an everlasting hell, which cannot by any means in their power be avoided? It is hard to think thus of God. And yet it is abundantly plain, that if there be no gospel message to some of the human race, to the same some salvation will be an impossibility. Can the Father of mercies, who has enriched our natures with the power of so many enjoyments, have, at the same time, determined to inflict upon a part of our race the heaviest, the most inconceivable doom? Can God, in his good providence, smile upon a section of his children, and yet be ready to launch them into an ocean of fire and brimstone that burneth for ever and ever? If one of our fellow-men could possibly possess such a character, the world would call him a hypocrite, a Judas, an assassin, a devil. Is this the image of that pure and perfect Being "who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? That word "*whosoever*" comes to us like an angel of mercy from the loving heart of God, and pours out its vials of wrath upon such blasphemy.

Again, God, who is a Being of infinite love, must have a gospel, a message of mercy to every one of the human family. Whatever is infinite must, from its nature, embrace every object which can come within its sphere. Space, infinite space, which has been called an attribute of God, embraces every form of creation throughout the divine empire. There is not a star, or planet, or meteor, that sparkles or burns on the brow of night, or wends its solitary way through heaven, which can possibly cast its light beyond the confines of space. Were there a boundary line beyond which a part of creation extends, space would cease to be infinite. Such an idea, however, is inconceivable. If, then, God's love is infinite, every creature capable of love must be within the pale of his love, and, in some way or another, experience its power. Were it otherwise, were there any sensitive or rational beings in the universe, to which his love did not extend, it would be limited in its range, and would lose its character of infinity. But if there is a part of the human race, to whom there is no gospel, no message of mercy and love, and who are doomed to suffer through all eternity the punishment of hell, in such a case, it is evident enough that the love of God could not be called infinite. There must, therefore, be a gospel message to every one of the human race.

But does the love of God extend to the lost in hell? If his love is infinite it must extend even to the region of woe. There can be no exceptions. Were there any, infinite love would become finite in its character. There would be a boundary over which it did not pass, and a part of God's rational creation excluded from his love. But does not infinite justice restrict the exercise of infinite love? If it did so, there would be an opposition between the attributes of justice and love. The former invading the province of the

latter would disturb or destroy the harmony of the Divine Unity. Every attribute of God must have its full and free exercise. His wisdom, holiness, justice, goodness, and faithfulness being all infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, are in perfect accordance with each other. Justice, indeed, may punish, but punishment is not inconsistent with love. An earthly father may punish the child of his love with the rod of correction because of his love for the erring one. In like manner is it with our heavenly Father. In love he chastises his own dear children. Paul the Apostle says—"Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." If so, punishment is perfectly consistent with love. Punishment, to be justifiable, must be but the means to an end, and that end must be good, or believed to be good. If it is an end, or, in other words, punishment for its own sake, then it becomes unjustifiable, vicious, devilish, and at variance with infinite love and mercy. No human being, with a spark of humanity in his breast, could act in such a manner unless, for the time, he was under the control of the deepest malice and revenge.

Since writing the above, we have just seen a passage which is in striking conformity with our ideas on this topic. This passage we found in a work entitled "Words in Season," written by the Rev. Henry B. Browning, M.A., Rector of St. George with St. Paul, Stamford. The passage is as follows:—

"There is no subject on which men are more liable to err than in their conceptions of the nature of the Divine Justice. The ordinary notion of justice is that of retribution—the bestowal of so much reward for so much service; the infliction of so much punishment for so much sin. Even the notion of justice *rewarding* has become somewhat obscured, by reason of the greater prominence which is given

to the associated idea of justice *punishing*. The retributions of justice are thus commonly thought of as being almost exclusively penal—so much pain for so much transgression. Men transfer this idea with the added notion of infinity to their conception of the justice of God, and thence infer that the Divine justice is infinite, eternal, inexorable vindictiveness. Hence it has come to be believed, that salvation is altogether of the Divine mercy, and condemnation altogether of the Divine justice. Thus there has grown up in the minds of many persons a habit of regarding these two Divine attributes, justice and mercy, as in themselves antagonistic and irreconcileable; and the supposed necessity of a plan of salvation so contrived as at once to satisfy the Divine justice, and to justify the Divine mercy in behalf of those who are delivered from the wrath to come.

"One thing, however, is certain, that no notion of Divine justice can be true which does not fully harmonise with whatever we know of other attributes of God. The reality of the Divine unity is at once destroyed, if we conceive that any two attributes of God are in themselves irreconcileable. There can be no infinite unity in a nature which, at the same time, embodies or contains two infinite contraries. God would be an infinite self-contradiction, if two irreconcileable infinite attributes dwelt in him. It must, therefore, be an error to suppose that the Divine justice conflicts with the Divine mercy, or that which satisfies the one does not satisfy the other. There is no such contrariety in God; therefore any definition given either of his justice or to his mercy, which shows them to be essentially irreconcileable, must be incorrect.

"*Justice in God is the right-doing of Infinite Love: it is the Love of God operating according to the immutable laws of his*

divine order. His love desires, his wisdom contrives, and his power executes nothing but what is for the real welfare of his creatures. It is therefore impossible that his mercy could incline him to do what his justice forbids, or that any contrivance should be needed to reconcile these two attributes of his divine nature. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' Yes, and for the reason that he is infinite in love and infinite in wisdom, as well as infinite in power; and because these are the trinity of essentials in his divine unity, which comprise all that he is in himself to us. The only rational and sure basis of confidence in God is belief in the absolute harmony of the Divine attributes—that he is ever mercifully just, and justly merciful, towards the children of men. Mercy ever desires and strives to save every man, but only a salvation which is in accordance with the immutable laws of Divine order, the end of which is the highest welfare of the individual and the universe. The manifestation of the Divine love towards mankind, must necessarily follow certain definite and immutable principles. These definite and immutable principles, according to which God operates in human souls, are the laws of Divine justice. One of these laws is the preservation in every man of the power of free determination in regard to spiritual things; for if man do not freely receive the Divine blessings, they cannot be appropriated or really become his. God strives to enter into every soul, to fill man's affectionate nature with love, his intellectual nature with wisdom, and his activities with new powers of doing good, and finding delight therein. To the extent that a man is willing for God to come in, he enters; and to that extent, according to the just laws of divine operation, God blesses the man. If a man is not willing for God thus to come in, God's love, wisdom, and power cannot, and do not enter into that man; and

this, too, according to the just laws of Divine operation—and the state of that man is hell. Hence, in God, *justice is the rule of mercy*, the rule according to which it ever operates; so that we may say with the Psalmist, 'Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for thou renderest to every man according to his work.'

"There is no contradiction as to the harmony of the Divine retribution, in the fact that Divine justice provides for the punishment of sin. It is the highest mercy to punish the sinner whom nothing but punishment could restrain from wickedness. The more certainly that wickedness is disorder, and that disorder is productive of misery—the more certainly that obedience is order, and that order is productive of happiness, the more certainly true it is that mercy must seem cruel to be kind. Punishment is not an end in itself; it is but a means to an end, and that end is altogether merciful. Punishment which is merely vindictive, and without merciful ends in view, has no place in the Divine government.

"Even the punishments of hell are no exception to the operation of the Divine mercy. The notion of hell as a place of arbitrary punishment, eternally inflicted by an implacable Deity, for past acts of wickedness committed during the sinner's life on earth, however apparently supported by the letter of Scripture, is utterly untenable. There is, indeed, punishment in hell, but it is such punishment for *present acts* of wickedness as is *repressive* and *restraining* only, and thus altogether merciful. God sends no one to hell; but all who go down to that world of death go there of their own choice, drawn to their associates in evil by the attraction of their ruling passions. The passages of Scripture which, in the literal sense, seem to assert that God commands the wicked to be cast into outer darkness and the tormenting flames,

are accommodations of language to the natural ideas of man. In so far as it is a law of Divine order that, in the other world as indeed in this, men shall desire and strive to be with their like, and shall prefer to abide with such, in that sense, God commands the consequence in instituting the law. But the law is merciful, both in its purpose and in its operation; for by virtue of this law, all the associations of heaven are formed; and even in the associations of hell the lost spirit is less miserable than it would be in heaven. The suffering of the infernals is a dread reality, the necessary consequence of their disorder and evil state; but the Divine mercy is present even in hell, operating through the inevitable law by which evil punishes itself, to restrain them from the excess of evil, which would aggravate their misery. Fear of punishment is the only restraining motive in beings confirmed in evil; and the Divine mercy ever seeks to limit the raging of their lusts, and thus to save them from the increase of suffering. He, therefore, uses that motive as the only means to this beneficent end."

The doctrine, therefore, which teaches that there is no gospel, no message of mercy, to a portion of the human race, appears to be at variance with the character of God, and to destroy the unity of the Divine attributes.

After what has been said on the subject of God's mercy to all men, it may be sufficient to quote a few texts of Scripture only, showing that the Father of mercy desires the salvation of all without exception. Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, writes as follows:—"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to

be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not); a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity. I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting."

Were a Jew or a Turk, a Hindoo, a Socialist, or an Infidel to be asked what is the plain meaning of this passage of Scripture, would he not say that, as God desires his people to pray for all men, and wills that all men may be saved, and as Christ gave himself a ransom for all, there must be a message of mercy, good tidings, to every one of the human family? Yes: such would be his answer, and we think the answer of every candid mind. There is nothing in the terms of the language here employed which would lead him to a different conclusion. The several *alls* which occur in the exhortation would be to him as so many witnesses of the truth, that there must be a message of mercy to every sinner without exception. Had Paul believed that there was a gospel message to some only, surely he never would have used words of so universal a character. By so doing he would have been misleading his dear son Timothy. Had he believed that Jesus gave his life a ransom for some only, and that the doctrine which teaches that every one of the race may come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved, was a heresy, a dangerous error, is it at all likely, or even probable, that he could or would have written in the manner in which he has done in the passage before us? The Apostle, who was an acute scholar, and who has written in one of the most copious and beautiful languages of the world, could, had he intended it, have employed such a

propriety and precision of words as would have clearly expressed the idea of a limited gospel. But, on the contrary, let us suppose that he meant to tell the world that there was a gospel message to all without exception, could he have written this passage in more appropriate terms? Were we to ask any of the narrow brethren, for whom did Christ die? and for whom is there a gospel of peace? would he use the language of the Apostle, and say—Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all;" God "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth"? No; he could not consistently embody such language into his credal confession. The terms would have first to be modified, changed, or explained; and the *alls* would, by some occult or sleight of hand process, be turned into *somes*. No such mysterious or theological processes are required with the believer in God's message of mercy to all without exception. He can, without any species of mutilation, take the language as it stands, in all its length and breadth, and make it a part of his confession of faith.

But, further, looking at the logical construction of the passage, we think that it contains evidence that there is a gospel message to every one of the human race. Paul, in exhorting Timothy, is very particular in his enumeration of the different ways in which prayer is to be offered up to God. "I exhort," says he, "that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority." Here the Apostle exhorts Timothy that prayers in their different forms are to be made for all men, for every one of the human race. That such is his meaning there can be but little doubt. When this Epistle was written, Nero was Emperor of Rome. Doubtless no such monster of iniquity ever filled a throne. During his reign no crime was too

horrible which he did not perpetrate. The nearest and dearest ties which bind human hearts together were no safeguards to withhold him from his barbarities. In his thirst for blood, his own mother and also his wife did not escape his butchery. By his cruelties the streets of Rome were drenched with the blood of his innocent victims; and when the cloud of night had gathered over the unhappy city, the palace-gardens were lighted up with the blaze of burning Christians. At last when he found that he had been abandoned by his flatterers, and had become obnoxious to his subjects, he ordered one of his officers to kill him. Thus died a man of the worst character which the world has ever beheld. Yet Paul exhorts Timothy that prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for this very monster of cruelty and crime. But prayers were to be made not only for this chief of all unrighteousness, but likewise for all those who were then in authority. And who were they? Heathens, persecutors, worshippers of false gods. Few, if any, ever came to the knowledge and practice of the truth. Yet these, all these, were to be the subjects of prayer. But the exhortation of Paul applies not only to all those in authority, but to all the heathen of that age. This is expressly stated by the Apostle. If Nero and the persecuting authorities were to be the subjects of prayer—if the favour of God was to be extended to them—if the Divine heart was thus interested in their spiritual well-being, can it be less so to all the others without exception? Were there at the time when Paul wrote this Epistle, two classes of men who never believed—the one to be prayed for, but the other not? We dare say that no follower of Jesus ever believed the affirmative of such a question. If so, it follows that not only Nero and all in authority, but also every one of Adam's race without exception, were to be the subjects of

"supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks." Moreover, it is not likely that *any* Christian would refuse to pray for *any* unconverted man. If Paul could pray for the worst of men, and his beloved Master could pray for his murderers, surely it becomes every follower of the Lamb to follow their example.

But, further, the Apostle gives a reason, that prayer is to be made for all men without distinction or exception: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." This reason plainly shows, that it was the conversion of every unbeliever for whom prayer was to be made. If, then, prayer is to be offered up to God for the conversion of all without exception, it follows that there must be a message of mercy, a glorious gospel to the same all without exception. Were there no gospel to some of the human race, God would not call upon his people to pray for their conversion. Were there no gospel message to a part of the unbelieving world, to that part salvation would be an impossibility. Would the All-wise God call upon his beloved to pray for an impossibility?

But let us suppose that the reason given by Paul to prove that prayer must be made for all men without exception meant that "God will have" some "men" only "to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Such a supposition would involve a logical fallacy. In such a case the conclusion would be wider than the premises. It would be inferring the genus from the species, and which is at variance with the scientific truhs of the prince of logicians. Thus Paul or his inspirer would be chargeable with false reasoning. But take the reason as it stands in the passage, "God will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth," the argument is beautiful and conclusive.

But the Apostle proceeds further to prove that God will have all men without exception to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. The argument which he employs for this purpose is as follows :—" For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all." The reason assigned here to prove that God desires all men without exception to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth is, that Christ gave himself a ransom for all. Now, if Jesus gave himself a ransom for some only, the reasoning would be liable to the same objection as in the former case. The conclusion would be of greater extent than the premises. The reasoning, therefore, would be fallacious, and at variance with scientific principles. But on the contrary, if Jesus gave himself a ransom for all without exception, the reasoning is logically correct. Hence, these conclusions logically follow :—In the first place, all men, without exception, are the subjects of prayer of such a nature as leads to their conversion. Secondly, that "all men," without exception, may "be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Thirdly, that all men, without exception, are the subjects for whom Christ died, " who gave himself a ransom for all." Fourthly, that all men, without exception, have a message of mercy, a gospel message, sent them by God through his Son Jesus Christ. Fifthly, that all men, without exception, have the power given them by God either to receive or to reject the gospel of Christ.

If it be said, and we believe that it has been said, that the Bible teaches that there is a gospel message for all, and yet it is for some only, in such a case that blessed book must contradict itself. The following propositions cannot be both true :—

All men, without exception, have a gospel message sent to them by God through Christ ;

Some men have not a gospel message sent to them by God through Christ.

These two propositions differ both in respect to quantity and quality, and are, according to the Doctrine of Opposition, logical contradictories. The one, therefore, must be true; the other must be false. Had they been sub-contraries in contingent matter, they would in that case been both true; but, being contradictories, the one is necessarily true, the other necessarily false. But we have proved to our own satisfaction, and we trust to that of others, that the former of these propositions is true; and if so, the latter, that some men have not a gospel message sent to them by God through Christ, must be false. The truth cannot contradict itself; if it did, it would cease to have any claim upon our faith.

We shall quote a few texts, showing that there is a message of mercy to every man, without distinction and exception. "As, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon *all men*, unto justification of life." (Rom. v. 18.) "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." (Rom. x. 12.) "The living God is the Saviour of *all men*, especially of those that believe." (1 Tim. iv. 40.) "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto *all men*." (Titus ii. 11.)

And now, dear reader, we trust from what has been said, you will see that there is a Saviour for you, a Saviour who "loved you, and gave himself for you"; and that God desires that you should be saved, and should come to the knowledge of the truth. Should you die in your sins, a rebel to God, will it be God's fault, or will it be your own? If you say that it is God's fault do you not utter a horrible

blasphemy? Would you accuse the infinitely wise and good God as the cause of your damnation? God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather they would turn from evil ways and come unto him. Whose fault is it, then? What do your heart and conscience say? Do they not testify against you? Do they not say, the fault is yours? Do not your past sins rise in judgment against you and say, the fault is yours? Were there no gospel message to you, could the fault be yours? Were there no message of mercy to you, would not your salvation be an impossibility? Had you no power given you to receive the message of God's love, would not your salvation be likewise an impossibility? In such a case, could the fault of your unbelief, of your being lost, be yours? Surely God is not so hard a taskmaster as to send any of his creatures to hell on the ground of not doing impossibilities. Such is not the character of the infinitely good and wise God. Can this be the character of that Being who "so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"? If God has so loved you, so loved the world of sinners, does he put hindrances in the way of your salvation? Love does not put hindrances in the path of those who are its subjects; but, on the contrary, it removes them. The way to everlasting life is as open to you as it was to Peter or Paul. May you not then be saved? How many voices cry aloud and say, Come and be saved! Does not your conscience accuse you, and say, Come and be converted? Do not the deepest sympathies of your heart and understanding unite their voices and say, Come and be saved? Hear the words of inspiration, through the Apostle John:—"And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And who-

soever will let him take of the water of life freely." Dear reader, would you be converted, saved, you must begin a new life. If, in your past life, you have been led by the devil, the world, and the flesh—if your own selfishness has been the chief object which has engaged your time and talents, you must become a follower of the meek and humble Nazarene. You must cease to cheat, lie, or swear, avoid all unclean thoughts, words, or actions, and strive earnestly to bring your whole nature, body, and soul in conformity to the teachings of Jesus. If you are conscious that your heart's highest ambition is to be more and more like Jesus, then you have passed from death unto life, from the service of sin to the service of the living God.

To obtain this blessed state of mind, is it within the pale of your privileges and power? You know that it is. If you are lost, whom will you accuse? Be in no haste to answer this question. Think over it conscientiously, and without prejudice. Can you think that God desires your damnation? Such an idea is pure blasphemy. On the contrary, he desires your salvation; and he "will have all men to come to the knowledge of the truth." Whom then have you to accuse? Is it not yourself, your very self? Does not your conscience say so? Is not your salvation, then, within the compass of your power and the means which the loving Saviour has taught you to use? Let the stream of God's truth flow freely into your understanding and conscience. Let its life-giving water find a lodgment in your heart. Unless you see and feel the beauty, purity, and heavenly character of Jesus and his teachings, unless you see and feel God's love in the gift of his Son, and be prepared to be faithful unto death, faithful to God and to your conscience, you cannot say that you are converted, or born again of the truth. To profess belief in what you

neither understand nor feel, cannot produce any genuine change in your life. If your belief of the truth is caused by the fear of hell, then the governing principle of your life is fear. Such a fear may, to some extent, restrain from acts of vice, but it cannot mould the heart to piety and virtue. Supreme love to the Great Father, and the love of your neighbour as yourself, must be the mainsprings of your life, of all your activities, whether of body or of mind. Love is the foundation stone on which all God's truth is built, whether in nature or in revelation. Should you build on any other foundation it will totter and fall.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BELIEVER'S CONFIDENCE IN THE GOOD SHEPHERD, THAT HE WILL GIVE HIM A BLESSED IMMORTALITY.

"I shall dwell in the house of God for ever."

THE house of which the Psalmist speaks, must mean "the house of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." It could not be the earthly tabernacle in which he was accustomed to worship; for this interesting fane with its form of religious services, has long since passed away. Neither could it be the temple of Jerusalem, whose grandeur was the admiration of surrounding nations. For many centuries, that sacred edifice, once the glory of Palestine, has not left even a lonely ruin to mark the spot which it formerly occupied. Its grand festivals to which millions of pious Jews came to worship and praise the God of their fathers, have passed away as the memory of a dream. How changed the scene! No longer is seen the pious Jew on his way to the feast of the passover. No more is seen the high-priest laying aside his garments of gold, and clothing himself in white attire, entering the holy of holies on the great day of atonement. No longer is heard around that sacred edifice, the bleating of sheep, the bellowing of cattle, or the clink of the money-changers. No more is heard in that home of tender memories, long cherished by the Jew, the voice of prayer to the only living and true God. No longer is seen the morning and the evening sacrifice, or the

golden altar of incense that stood near the vail. Zion the beautifnl, the pride of Judea, the joy of all the land, like its ancient worshippers, has, for more than eighteen hundred years, been laid in the dust. In its place, on its very site, stands the Mosque of Caliph Omer, conspicuous beyond all others in that land of murder and miracle, for its size, beauty, and magnificence. Such, however, has been the enmity of its worshippers, that, for many centuries, neither Jew nor Christian, were permitted to enter its gates or to tread its spacious court. Weep, O daughter of Judah, and hang thy harp on the willow-tree; for the glory of thy beloved Zion is departed, and numbered with the things that once were. How is the mighty fallen! and the solemn ceremony become as an unclean thing!

> "Where is thy temple and thy God?
> Where are thy triumphs flown?
> All vanished like a fiery cloud
> That flashes and is gone."

It is, therefore, plain, that, when the Psalmist says, "I shall dwell in the house of God for ever," he means that he will enjoy a blessed immortality in the heavenly house, not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God.

Very great importance has ever been attached to the subject of the soul's immortality. It is one of those grand truths which lie at the foundation of all religion. In every age, it has formed a portion of the creed of savage as well as of civilised nations. On this subject, the worshipper of idols, the follower of Mahomet, the adherent of Moses, and the disciple of the loving Nazarene, can unite their faith, and can look forward with satisfaction and joy, to that blessed paradise, where death cannot reign. There is no subject so deeply interesting, so deserving of the highest attention, and of the most careful examination, as that of

the soul's immortality. Without it, religion, in a great measure, is bereft of its power, loses its heavenly charm, and becomes little more than an empty name. If man has no conscious existence beyond this life; if all his attainments of art and science be for ever lost; if all his labours and sacrifices for the good, the true, and the holy, become as the morning cloud and the early dew, will he care about any thing but his own selfishness? Should he assume the forms of piety and virtue, it will be either to serve his private ends, to minister to his earthly pleasures, or to advance his ambitious designs. If man has no faith in a life beyond the grave, all his interests, sympathies, and happiness, will be within the confines of this world. To him, the gospel will appear but a glittering toy, calculated to deceive the credulous, to frighten the timid, and to comfort the foolish believer. If so, it may be assumed, that just as the strength or the weakness of a man's belief in the doctrine of immortality is, so will the character of his goodness or his badness be. Should he have any doubts on this corner stone of faith, his moral and religious activities will, for the most part, be of a mixed kind, oscillating between virtue and vice, or serving both God and Mammon. Such a one is likely to have but little stability of character, and is in danger of falling into an utter disregard of all religion, if not into the form of the darkest infidelity. Dr. Young in his preface to "Night the Sixth," in the *Complaint*, uses the following language on the subject of immortality:—

"Few ages have been deeper in dispute about religion than this. The dispute about religion and the practice of it, seldom go together. The shorter, therefore, the dispute, the better. I think it may be reduced to this simple question: is man immortal, or is he not? If he is not, all our disputes are mere amusements, or trials of skill. In this

case, truth, reason, religion, which give our discourses such pomp and solemnity, are mere empty sounds without any meaning in them. But if man is immortal, it will behove him to be very serious about consequences; or, in other words, to be truly religious. And this great truth, unestablished in the mind of man, is, I conceive, the real source and support of all our infidelity, how remote soever the particular objections advanced may seem to be from it.

"The heathen world confessed that they rather hoped than firmly believed immortality; and how many heathens have we still among us! The sacred page assures us that life and immortality are brought to light in the gospel; but by how many is the gospel rejected, or overlooked! From these considerations, and from my being accidentally privy to the sentiments of some particular persons, I have been long persuaded that most, if not all, of our infidels, whatever name they take, or whatever scheme they support, are supported in their deplorable error by some doubt of their immortality at bottom. And I am satisfied that men, once thoroughly convinced of their immortality, are not far from being Christians."

If, then, the disbelief of this fundamental truth leads to selfishness and infidelity, its belief, on the contrary, will lead to religion. It must, therefore, be a matter of the highest importance to have the mind fully convinced as to the truth of this great doctrine of the gospel. Should there be any doubt on this subject, it will relax the tie which binds us to God and to our fellowmen, will operate unfavourably on the moral character, and be the means of causing much inconsistency and irregularity of life. Any form of argument, therefore, which can strengthen our faith in this grand truth, must be desirable to every one who wishes well to his fellowman.

And here we would observe that all men have, from the earliest ages of the world, believed in the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. This comforting truth has been believed by the heathen as well as by the Christian world, by the ignorant and the learned, by the savage and by the philosopher. Even to the present hour, confidence in the soul's immortality has not been shaken either by the progress of science or the advancement of civilisation. These, on the contrary, rather strengthen than weaken the faith of this blessed doctrine. It is true that, on the subject of a future state, the views of the nations both ancient and modern have been different in their character; yet, as regards the soul's conscious existence beyond this life, there appears to be no disagreement. The Celt and the Scythian, the Druid and the Egyptian, the Northern Indian and the ancient Briton, the Assyrian, the Persian, the Carthaginian, if not every nation of the earth whose history and traditions have come down to our time, have believed that the thinking principle in man survives the dissolution of the body. The natives of the Society Islands do not only believe in the soul's immortality, but likewise in different degrees of eminence and happiness, according as they have been more or less faithful to the Great Spirit while on earth. The people of the Friendly Isles believe that after death the deceased is carried away in a swift-sailing canoe to a far distant land, in which it is no more subject to disease and death, and is abundantly supplied with everything that can minister to his enjoyment. The natives of the Pelew Islands, whose religious rites are but few, believe in one God, in future rewards and punishments, and in the soul's conscious existence after death. Very singular in their religious views are the natives of New Zealand. They believe that after the body of a man has lain three days in the

grave, the heart is separated from the corpse. This fact, they imagine, is foretold by a general wind, caused by a god which hovers over the place of interment. The heart being thus separated is carried to the clouds by this divinity. They also believe that those who are killed in battle and eaten by the enemy, are doomed to perpetual fire; but those that are rescued or die a natural death ascend to the dwelling-place of the gods. The faith of the Northern nations differed considerably from that of the East. It is fierce and warlike in its character. They believed that the souls of those who fought and fell bravely in battle enjoyed perfect happiness in a state of future bliss. In that paradise into which the spirits of their heroes entered, they believed that they spent the day in mimic hunting matches, or in combats with shadows; and at night they assembled in the palace of Valhalla, where they feasted on the most delicious fare, dressed and served by the most beautiful virgins, flushed with all the bloom of everlasting youth. And in that land of bliss they enjoy themselves by drinking nectar out of the skulls of their enemies whom they had slain in battle. The Kalmuc Tartars make the doctrine of immortality a principal part of their religion; and they believe that all those who have obtained the victory over all their appetites, affections, and passions, pass immediately into heaven, where they enjoy perfect rest, and engage in religious services through endless ages. The Samoiedians, who live in the northern parts of Tartary, believe in a Supreme Being, and that all who lead a virtuous life shall be, in future, blessed by being promoted to a happy state of existence. The Birmans, who hold the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, maintain that the highly vicious shall be exposed to lasting punishment; but that the virtuous shall enjoy everlasting happiness on a mountain called Meru.

The various tribes inhabiting the continent of Africa, appear to believe in the immortality of the soul. "I was lately discoursing on this subject," said Mr. Addison in one of the earlier numbers of the *Spectator*, "with a learned person who has been very much conversant among the inhabitants of the most western parts of Africa. Upon his conversing with several in that country, he tells me that their notion of heaven, or of a future state of happiness, is this: that every thing we wish for will immediately present itself to us. We find, say they, that our souls are of such a nature that they require variety, and are not capable of being always delighted with the same objects. The Supreme Being, therefore, in compliance with this taste of happiness which he has implanted in the soul of man, will raise up from time to time, say they, every gratification which it is in the human nature to be pleased with. If we wish to be in groves or bowers among running streams or falls of water, we shall immediately find ourselves in the midst of such a scene as we desire. If we would be entertained with music and the melody of sounds, the concert arises upon our wish, and the whole region around us is filled with harmony. In short, every desire will be followed by fruition; and whatever a man's inclination directs him to will be present with him." In the interior of Africa, the negroes and other tribes of inhabitants believe in God, and that, according to their deeds in this life, they shall be happy or miserable in a future state of conscious existence. The Gallas of Abyssinia, though they do not believe in future punishments, yet admit the doctrine of the soul's immortality. The various tribes of Mahometans throughout the world, the Mandingoes, the Jaloffs, the Feelops, the Foulahs, the Moors, believe in future rewards and punishments in another world. The natives of Dahomey also believe that the soul survives

the body, and enters into a new state of existence; and the king, when any remarkable event occurs, informs his forefathers in the unseen world, by giving to some ones near him a message to carry to them, and whose head is immediately chopped off for this object.

The Persians in burying their dead leave a part of the grave open, believing that after a period has elapsed the dead will regain their consciousness, and be visited by angels who will point out to them their future abodes in the world of spirits. The Japanese believe also in the immortality of the soul, and in future rewards and punishments, and that according to the manner in which a man spends his life in this world, so will be the measure of his punishment or his happiness in that which is to come. The belief of the Hindoos is no less expressive of the doctrine of a future state of existence. How many of the widows of that numerous race ascend the funeral pile of their husbands, and sacrifice themselves that they may enjoy with them the happiness of eternal life. The Arabs of Wahabee do not mourn for the dead, but count it an act of impiety so to do, as they believe that the dead are enjoying with their great prophet the happiness of paradise. The Javanese even make festal gatherings, and rejoice at the death of their friends, believing that they have entered into a state of great happiness.

The ancient poets of Greece and Rome have embodied in their writings the popular belief of a future state of existence. The narrative, given by Homer, of the descent of Ulysses into hell, and the description of Minos sitting upon his tribunal, dispensing justice to the numerous dead, adjusting rewards to the virtuous and punishment to the vicious, is a proof that the age held the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. In the poems of Ovid and Virgil we

have also a similar account of future punishment. Ixion, in consequence of his crimes, is described as strongly bound to a wheel, whose constant and rapid revolutions leave him not a moment for rest or repose. Tantalus, for his impiety to the gods, in serving them with a loathsome banquet, is represented as standing in a pool of water as high as the chin, and being intensely hungry and thirsty, he is, at the same time, bereft of all power to partake of the apples hanging just at his lips, or to take one drop of water to quench his raging thirst. Sysiphus, too, celebrated for his notorious robberies, is condemned to penal servitude, having to roll a great stone up a steep hill, which, on reaching the top, suddenly comes down with a thundering noise to its base, and causes him to renew his toil without any intermission of repose. The fifty daughters of Danaus who, for their bloody crime of murdering their husbands in one night, were condemned, in the place of punishment, to fill with water a barrel full of holes, which at once ran out as fast as it poured in. Besides the region of darkness where the vicious are punished, there was also the region of light where the virtuous were rewarded. In the Hesperian gardens and the Elysian fields, the spirits of the departed good are described as free from all the painful incidents of life, free from all anxiety, sorrow, and trial, either of body or of mind, and enjoying every variety of pure and solid pleasure through the lapse of everlasting ages.

In the Phaedon of Plato, Socrates, who is, perhaps, the most celebrated for his wisdom and integrity of character among the ancients, is represented as conversing with a number of philosophers on the immortality of the soul. On this subject he says—"When the dead are arrived at the rendezvous of souls, whither their angel conducts them, they are all judged. Those who have passed their lives in

a manner neither entirely criminal nor absolutely innocent, are sent into a place where they suffer pains proportionate to their faults, till, being purged and cleansed of their guilt, and afterwards restored to liberty, they receive the reward of their good actions which they have done in the body. Those who are judged to be incurable, on account of their great crimes, the fatal *Destiny* that passes judgment upon them hurls them into Tartarus, from which they never depart. Those who are found guilty of crimes, great indeed, but worthy of pardon, who have committed violence in the transport of rage against their father or mother, or have killed some one in a like emotion, and afterwards repented, suffer the same punishment with the last, but for a time only, till, by prayers and supplications, they have obtained pardon from those they have injured. But those who have passed through life with peculiar sanctity of manners are received on high into a pure region, where they live without their bodies to all eternity, in a series of joy and delights which cannot be described." In accordance with such views Socrates says—"If the soul be immortal, it requires to be cultivated with attention, not only for what we call the time of life, but for that which is to follow—I mean eternity; and the least neglect in this point may be attended with endless consequences. If death were the final dissolution of being, the wicked would be great gainers by it by being delivered at once from their bodies, their souls, and their vices; but as the soul is immortal, it has no other means of being freed from its evils, nor any safety for it, but in becoming very good and wise; for it carries nothing with it but its good or bad deeds, its virtues, and its vices, which are commonly the consequences of the education which it has received, and the causes of eternal joy or eternal misery." After this manner thus spoke the wisest

and, perhaps, the best man of all Greece to a circle of philosophical friends. It was the dying confession of one of whom the world was not worthy. After a pause the poisoned cup of his persecutors was put into his hands, and which he drank off with the greatest serenity. His departing from the world was like one who was exchanging a miserable life for one of everlasting blessedness.

The consent of all nations to this great doctrine, from the most savage to the most civilised, and that from time immemorial, together with all the intelligence of the advancing age, is a strong argument of the soul's immortality. If such a universality of belief in support of man's conscious existence in a future state has no foundation in truth, it would be without a precedent in the experience of mankind. It cannot be shown that any doctrine which has been believed so universally through every age of the world, has no basis in truth. All nations have believed in man's responsibility for his actions during every period of his known history, and which is still acknowledged to be a truth which few will deny. That all kindreds and tribes of men have believed, during every generation of the past, in the existence of virtue and vice, in the improvement of the human mind, and in a Supreme Ruler who governs the universe, is a fact which few will deny. The truth of such beliefs, few or none have the confidence openly to oppose. They are looked upon as established truths. The belief in the immortality of the soul belongs to the same class of truths, and it has been as universally acknowledged to be a grand and glorious fact in all ages of the world. It is true that some have not believed in a future state of conscious existence. But such unbelief would not by any means prove it to be untrue. Some have followed in the wake of Bishop Berkeley, denying the evidence of their senses, and believing that there is no ma-

terial world. Others have believed in no God, in no responsibility, in no distinction between virtue and vice. Such unbelief has not, however, disproved that there is no God, no responsibility, no material world, or no distinction between virtue and vice, and which has been acknowledged as truth by the general sense of mankind from time immemorial down to the present hour. The belief in the immortality of the soul belongs to the same class of truths, and which has been as universally and religiously acknowledged as a truth of equal importance as regards its evidence. The advancement of civilisation, the progress of science, the discoveries of philosophy, and the dissemination of general intelligence, instead of weakening, have strengthened the faith of the soul's future existence. If, then, we believe in an intelligent First Cause, in the responsibility of man, in the existence of a material world, why not in the immortality of the soul? If the common sense of mankind has been found to be sufficient ground on which to believe the former, why should not the same ground be sufficient for believing the latter? If the former be accepted as true, so must the latter be accepted as true.

When a doctrine has been believed through all generations, it must have had its origin, either from revelation, or from the nature of man's constitution. All nations, whose records or traditions have come down to us, have, through all ages of the past, believed in some form of religion or another. This is a fact which may be said to be almost if not without exception. Had this universal belief of the nations in some form of religion, had its origin neither in revelation nor in man's nature, it could not have had any existence in the world. If man had not been endowed with the faculty of music, could there have been the practice of music amongst all the nations? And if the revelation of

the science of music had been made to man, it could not in such circumstances have had any practical existence, having no basis in the human mind. So would it have been with religion. Had there been no religious basis in man's constitution, no form of religion could have existed amongst the nations. Just as well might we expect to see houses without foundations, beautiful landscapes without sight, to hear the sweet sounds of music without the sense of hearing, or to enjoy the fragrance of flowers without the sense of smell, as to realise the sacred character and heavenly beauty of religion without corresponding faculties in the human constitution. If so, religion must have God for its author, as he is the maker of these very powers which constitute man a religious being. If God, then, has given man a religious nature, would he not provide an object on which that religious nature could find scope to exercise itself? For to suppose the inhabitation of mental faculties without some corresponding object on which to terminate, would be at variance with all that we know of man's nature. If God has endowed man with memory, judgment, reason, imagination, affection, appetite, and desire, he has provided for each of them its particular object on which to exercise itself. If He has endowed the body with so great a variety of organs, he has given to each its specific object on which to exercise itself. God, or Nature, if you please, never supplies man with a faculty or power without providing a special object, or design, to suit the activities of that faculty or power. It follows, therefore, that man's religious nature must have an object, and that object must be religion. But the belief in a future state of rewards and punishments, is one of the very fundamentals of all religions; for wherever the form of religion has been found to exist, there has been, without exception, the belief in a future state. It follows, therefore, that

man, both by the constitution of his nature, and from the fact that religion has always been a universal feature in the human family, must have a conscious existence beyond the grave.

Again, the universal desires of mankind for immortality and for earthly satisfaction are evidences of a future state of existence beyond this life.

No man during his earthly career is satisfied with his attainments. The student who has toiled for years in the path of literature and science, until he has become pale and emaciated over the midnight lamp, feels a restless desire to add to his acquisitions of knowledge. The philosopher, who has prosecuted his inquiries for half a century, is as anxious to discover new truths as when he first began. Neither is the statesman satisfied with legislative measures, the warrior with conquests, the poet with smooth and beautiful descriptive verse, the merchant with buying and selling, the capitalist with speculation, nor the miser with his heaps of gold. Go and inquire, if you can, through the lapse of ages down to present time, and you will find everywhere the element of dissatisfaction manifesting itself in various ways amongst all men. The richest, the most learned, yea, the most successful in all that the world could give, have been no exception. Was Alexander the Great satisfied with his many victories? Did he sit down contented with his acquisitions? No; he shed tears of sorrow that there was not another world to conquer. Was Newton the philosopher so satisfied with all his knowledge and the great discoveries which he made, as to cause him to sit down contented? No; he was just as earnest to add to his knowledge, to know more of the mysteries of the universe. When Franklin proved that lightning and the electric fluid were identical, did that discovery quench his thirst for

knowledge, and make him sit down contented? No; it only increased his desire to advance in the path of science. Should we prosecute our inquiries amidst the dens of poverty, or the haunts of pleasure and dissipation, or even in the palaces of kings, we shall find no one satisfied with the measure of earthly things. Beyond all that is possessed and enjoyed, there still remains something to be desired.

If man, then, has desires implanted in his constitution which nothing in this world can satisfy, there must be another state of existence in which the desires shall have their full satisfaction. The ox, the ass, and the antelope, the lion, the leopard, and the lark, the bull, the beaver, the bee, and all the lower animals, have their particular class of objects which fully satisfy their desires. But not so man. After he has attained all that the world can give, there are desires in his nature which remain unsatisfied. There must, therefore, be another state of existence in which these shall be fully satisfied. If it be not so, either nature or God must have implanted desires which no earthly object can satisfy. Such a supposition, however, would be at variance with divine wisdom and goodness, and also with the economy of the animated world. An infinitely wise and benevolent Being would never have formed man with desires which nothing in this world could satisfy, were there not another world in which these desires would have their full satisfaction. Were there no state of conscious existence beyond this life, in which these desires of man's nature could be satisfied, it would stultify the workmanship of God in man by endowing him with powers without corresponding objects on which to terminate the full exercise of these powers. Moreover, it would be inconsistent with his attribute of infinite goodness. Were there no future life when the body is dissolved, would it be compatible with the in-

finite benevolence of the Father of love to implant a restless thirst in the soul, and with no earthly means to give it satisfaction? No. So to do would be little short of an act of cruelty. Does not even Nature herself say that it is at variance with her arrangements both in the animal and vegetable kingdoms? Does she ever make demands without giving satisfactory supplies? Is she ever so poor as not to fill up the void which she causes to be made? There is only one void which nothing in all this world can satisfy, and that void is in man's nature. Both God and Nature testify that there is another world beyond the present one, where these desires shall have their full complement of satisfaction.

As a further proof of a future state beyond death, we would observe, that every species or class of conscious beings, whose powers have never been, and cannot be, fully developed or unfolded in this life, must have another life in which these powers shall be fully developed or unfolded. All the lower animals with which we are acquainted appear to have all their powers fully unfolded during the period of their lives. The fish, the fowl, and the creeping thing, have advanced no further in intelligence than when they began their course on earth. Do the thrush, the lark, and the nightingale attune their harps more sweetly now than they did when the charms of their wild music first fell on Adam's ear? No; they received their inspiring strains from God, that they might sing his praise, and which they have maintained in all their holiness during the long lapse of ages. Do the songsters of our day build a better nest than those which first came from the hand of God? No; the first efforts of these charmers in forming the homely nest were as complete and beautiful as those of our times. Has the fish improved in its power of swimming? Can it protect itself in a better way from its enemies? Has it improved in any

form since it was first launched into the waters? No; it swam as swiftly, guarded itself as well, and directed its course through the waters as perfectly thousands of years ago as it does in our own days. Has the lion, the tiger, the buffalo, the bee, or any of the creeping things of the earth, made by its efforts any advancement in art and science since it began to run its circle of active existence? Have the lion and the tiger laid aside their fierceness, or improved in the method of catching their prey? Has the bee improved in building its cell? Has the beaver, the buffalo, or the bear, devised new and better modes of life? No, no; all of them pursue the same monotonous round of activity as when they first received their mission from God. No species of inferior life has, indeed, advanced a single step in point of intelligence, since it was first placed upon the earth. Had the different classes of the lower tribes been endowed with powers of advancing, they would no doubt have given some evidence that they possessed such a power. Had there been an aptitude or fitness in any class of the lower animals in intelligence, it would certainly have shown itself during the lapse of ages. But it has been very different with man as a distinct class. His progress during the past has been gradual but continuous. No age of the world has ever witnessed the great family of man standing still; but, on the contrary, advancing in art and science and general knowledge. How many volumes would it require to record all the inventions, discoveries, and improvements which have been made during the course of man's existence on the earth! Let the millions of books, written on all subjects, testify to the fact of the mental and moral progress of the human soul. Undoubtedly, the progressive power with which the human race has been endowed has never been exhausted during any period of its known history. Even in

our times the progress of intelligent thought proceeds with a rapidity which is truly astonishing, daring any one to say, "Hither shalt thou come and no further." If, then, the human mind has been endowed with powers of advancing intelligence, which the lapse of time has failed to unfold, there must be another life in which these powers will have the means of further expansion. Were it not so, it would not be easy to see the propriety of implanting in man powers which could not be developed in this life. God and nature do nothing in vain. Were there no future life, would it not be in vain for Infinite Wisdom to endow the human race with powers which could not in the short term of its individual life ever be developed? Except idiots and the insane, can it be said of any other belonging to the class called man that he or she has ever reached the full development of his or her powers during life? If not, there must be another life, in which these powers will be unfolded. The character of God, the testimony of nature, and the deductions of reason, unite to support such a conclusion.

On this subject an elegant writer uses the following language:—"A man, considered in his present state, seems only sent into this world to propagate his kind. He provides himself with a successor, and quits his post to make room for him. He does not seem born to enjoy life, but to deliver it down to others. This is not surprising to consider in animals, which are born for our use, and which can finish their business in a short life. The silkworm, after having spun her task, lays her eggs and dies. Man can never take in his full measure of knowledge. He has not time to subdue his passions, establish his soul in virtue, and come up to the perfection of his nature before he is hurried off the stage. Would an infinitely wise Being make such glorious creatures for so mean a purpose? Can he delight

in the production of such abortive intelligence, such short-lived reasonable beings? Would he give us talents that are not to be exerted, capacities which are never to be gratified? How can we find that wisdom which shines through all His works in the formation of man, without looking on this world as a nursery for the next, and believing that the several generations of rational creatures, which rise up and disappear in such quick succession, are to receive only their first rudiments of existence here and afterwards to be transplanted into a more friendly climate, in which they will flourish through all eternity?"

Were the spirits of two persons once living upon the earth to make their appearance, and to identify themselves to the perfect satisfaction of several witnesses of the most trustworthy character, there would in such a case be no longer any doubt of the soul's conscious existence beyond the grave. In the affairs of this life, any judge or jury in court would consider such evidence as conclusive. All legal uncertainty would be removed. But there is on record evidence of a similar kind as regards the conscious existence of the soul beyond the grave. The evidence that the soul of man survives the ruins of the earthly tabernacle is as follows:—

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart. And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles: one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them: and, behold, a voice out of the cloud which

said, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man until the Son of Man be risen from the dead. And his disciples asked him, saying, Why, then, say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come and restore all things. But I say unto you, that Elias is come already and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of Man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

In this passage there is recorded the conscious existence of Moses and Elias after they had left this earthly scene. The proof of this fact rests on the testimony of three witnesses of unquestionable integrity. If the testimony of Peter, James, and John is untrue, it is not easy to see the motive than could induce them to unite in fabricating a lie. Was it the love of popularity? Impossible; the cause of Jesus was most unpopular in their day. Was it the love of fortune, or favour, or fame? It was not fortune; for they left to the mercy of the winds and the waves their nets on the shores of the sea of Galilee, and became the apostles of a faith which promised nothing in this world but hardship and poverty. Was it the favour of the great which they sought? No; the great ones of the earth were the bitter enemies of Jesus and his followers. Could the scene on the mountain be an invention of the three apostles for the purpose of extending their fame to future generations? Such a supposi-

tion is not very probable. It was the power of the truth which made them reject the teaching of Moses and to choose that of Jesus. It was the power of the truth that made them embrace a cause which promised nothing in this world but poverty, contempt, and persecution. They who can make such sacrifices are not likely to combine and fabricate a lie for the purpose of extending their fame. No one is prepared to seek the applause of his fellow-men when the way to it is through poverty, contempt, persecution, banishment, and a violent death.

When we read the history of a nation, and find several writers certifying the genuine character of some transaction, we generally feel but little difficulty in believing it to be true. We can believe, without any hesitation, that about seventeen centuries ago Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, the impartial historians of their day, wrote the following facts :—That Jesus Christ, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death; that this man founded a sect, and his followers supported it upon the reputation of working miracles; and that this sect rapidly increased, and became very numerous in many parts of the Roman empire. If, then, we believe these facts on the authority of three Roman historians, why should we not believe the reappearance of Moses and Elias on the authority of Matthew, Mark, and Luke? Is their testimony not as trustworthy as that of Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny? In several respects the Christian is more reliable than the heathen historians. Matthew, Mark, Luke, had personal access to Peter, James, and John, and were, therefore, favourably situated to know the truth of what they have recorded. The Roman historians had not the same advantages. They were witnesses neither of the crucifixion nor of the miracles of Christ. And as to trustworthiness, surely the Christian was not inferior to the heathen historians.

But the proof which the Gospel historians have recorded as to the reappearance of the dead fails to convince the sceptical mind. Persons of this class have no faith in the leading doctrines of the Bible, and, therefore, set aside its authority. They want evidence of a stronger and more direct kind. Though they believe in profane, they are not disposed to believe in Gospel history. As to the reappearance of the dead, the unbeliever wants facts, demonstrable facts, as proof of such a reappearance. Can such evidence be given? Is it within the range of human experiment and testimony? Is there to be found in our times faithful and trustworthy witnesses of the return of the departed? To meet the demands of the sceptic, of him who believes in no hereafter, of no conscious existence beyond this life, the Christian reader will not, we trust, be offended should we take the liberty of culling a leaf from the pages of Modern Spiritualism; for any evidence which can confirm so grand a truth as the immortality of the soul must meet the acceptance of every one who wishes well to his fellow-men. If this blessed doctrine be rejected, religion will be bereft of its power to support and comfort the soul in the trials of life. Remove from the mind of the Christian pilgrim the hope of enjoying the heavenly home, and what is left? Nothing but a solitary ruin of God's love, comprising a few pleasures mingled with many cares and troubles, and closing with sickness and death. It is, therefore, a matter of the greatest importance to have this article of our faith well grounded, as its denial forms the foundation of almost, if not all of our infidelity.

Let us now introduce to the sceptical reader the following passages, taken from an issue of a weekly journal, called the *Medium and Daybreak*, and dated 14th May, 1880.

"THE DEAD!—WHERE ARE THEY?

"IMPORTANT TESTIMONY.

"On the 13th of November, 1879, Mrs. Margaret Miller, the wife of Mr. John Miller, of 136 Percy Street, Newcastle, died, and was buried on the 16th of the same month. On the 8th day after the funeral took place, Mr. Miller attended one of Mrs. Esperance's seances, and there saw his wife, who appeared to him precisely the same in form and feature as before her death. He had no difficulty whatever in recognising her. An accident respecting her ring was referred to by her; but no one in the room, not even Mr. Miller himself, could give any explanation. On his return home, he learned from Miss Miller that what had been stated respecting the ring was perfectly correct.

"On Tuesday, the 10th of April last, Mr. Miller again saw his wife, and whilst standing beside her some one remarked, that it must be a great pleasure to him to have so positive proof as had been vouchsafed to him, when Mr. Miller exclaimed—'It's the greatest satisfaction of my life.'

'Did you really recognise her?' asked another.

'Most certainly; I have not a doubt upon my mind. Her features are the same, and her clothing is just like what she wore before she died.'

"On the 15th April Mr. Miller again saw his wife and his sister. Mrs. Isabella Fairlamb, No. 17 Railway Terrace, Gateshead, and Mr. William Armstrong, Newcastle, and others also, saw and recognised her, and they confirmed what Mr. M. had stated.

"On the 27th April and 2nd inst., Mr. Miller again saw his wife, and recognised her as before. Thus, on five separate occasions since the death of his wife, Mr. Miller had seen and identified her, and thereby had the best of all proofs of our immortality which can be given to man.

"The importance of such facts cannot be over-estimated, when we see the Church utterly incapable of coping with the doubt and materialism which has of late spread so rapidly everywhere throughout the civilised world. Men do not now readily accept any mere statement on any import-

ant subject, even if such be endorsed by the Church and the Bible. They ask for proof, and very reasonably so too. The sceptic asks, 'If I die, shall I live again?' The minister answers him in the affirmative. 'Tell me how I may be certain that I will live again—where are my friends who died?—where is my sister?—if they live, tell me where,' says the honest doubter. The clergyman answers, 'Here in the Book—the Bible—you will find all your questions answered.' 'If that be all the proof you can give, I must live and die denying there is a future state; and it's needless to talk to me of a Saviour until I know there is a life beyond the grave.'

"Spiritualism is simply the study of man and of nature's laws, and whoever will honestly and patiently learn, may in time have one of the greatest of all truths clearly and unmistakably proved to him—that there is no death; that what we call death is but a change of life; and that we, as well as our friends who have gone before, shall live on and on for ever.

"On the first occasion that Mrs. Miller appeared she was clothed in white. We were informed that she would not come again in white, but would appear in clothing similar to that which she wore before her death, in order that all who knew her might the more readily recognise her. This promise has been fulfilled, as on each occasion that she has appeared she has been in every respect like what she was before passing on to the Summerland.

"WM. ARMSTRONG.
"JOHN MILLER.
"MATTHEWS FIDLER."

Here three persons of trustworthy character have publicly given their names and addresses, and were it required they are prepared to sanction their testimony with an oath. Such evidence for murder would, in any court of the country, bring a man to the scaffold. The incident of the ring, as stated in the narrative, strengthens the evidence as to the identity of Mrs. Miller. Why should not the testimony of

William Armstrong, John Miller, and Matthews Fidler be accepted as proving the return of the departed Mrs. Miller? A will, when made by any person of sound mind and signed by two witnesses, is, in the eye of the law, considered to be quite satisfactory. Here there are three witnesses who sign their names to a published narrative of what they declare to be genuine facts. Why should their testimony be rejected? Is it not as strong as that of the will? If there is any difference, the evidence for the appearance of the departed is the stronger. Instead of two, there are three witnesses, besides several others who were present on five different occasions.

Dear reader, with such evidence before you, can you doubt the conscious existence of the soul beyond the grave? If so, you may equally doubt the records of all history; for the former is much better supported by evidence than the latter, as you have access to living witnesses of the facts.

For the further satisfaction of the sceptical reader who believes that death is an eternal sleep, I will subjoin a few additional facts, confirmatory of the soul's conscious existence beyond the grave.

The following is taken from the same number of the *Medium*. The article is headed as follows:—

"ONE OF THE SO-CALLED DEAD RETURNS AND IS RECOGNISED BY FOUR PERSONS.

"The last form that appeared at this séance was to me the most remarkable, and produced an impression which I shall not readily forget. I often feel how little I deserve to be permitted to work in such a cause as that of Spiritualism; and I feel my unworthiness of the innumerable privileges which have been continually bestowed on me. Notwithstanding this, I felt a stronger determination and resolution to work more earnestly than I had ever done to spread a

knowledge of the facts brought before me, proving the bond of union between this world and the next.

"An esteemed friend of mine, Mr. Biltcliffe, died about twelve months ago. He was a man well known in Gateshead. He took an active part in the Temperance cause; and was, for some years, Superintendent of a Sunday-school. Both he and Mrs. Biltcliffe, were Spiritualists; but she had never attended a séance for materialisation before the one I am now describing. When the séance was, as we thought, about to be closed, there appeared at the opening of the curtains a fine, tall, well-built man, with dark whiskers, dark hair, and clothed in long white robes. Altogether he had a majestic and noble appearance. In an instant I recognised in him my friend Mr. Hugh Biltcliffe.

"What is most remarkable about this materialisation, is the fact that not only did I recognise him, but his wife, my wife, and another lady present, all knew him when he immediately appeared. Besides these, there were two gentlemen sitting further away, who mentioned my friend's name, and asked if they were correct in their surmises as to the identity of the form. Thus four persons recognised him without doubt in their minds; whilst the other two, evidently knowing him, somewhat doubted the evidence of their senses. He came near me, and reached forward to shake hands. His grasp was firm and vigorous as was his wont during earth-life. And I accepted his fervent shake as an expression of thanks for little services which I had rendered him during his illness. His hand was somewhat larger than mine—was warm, soft, and quite natural. Had mine eyes been closed when he grasped my hand, I could not have mistaken it for that of the medium, seeing that it was at least a fourth larger. Indeed, I have no hesitation in affirming that I recognised him just as I know any friend that I unexpectedly meet.

"This is not the first case of recognition of a friend coming across the boundaries of the two worlds to visit those who are dear to him; yet I must say that it was the most conclusive evidence of man's immortality of anything which I had witnessed.

"On the evening of the same day as that on which the

séance took place, from the same platform at Gateshead, as that on which Mr. Hugh Biltcliffe had so often taken part in the work connected with the advocacy of Temperance, I announced the fact of his return and appearance amongst us; and a lady, Mrs. M. A. Hall, who had been one of his co-workers, and who recognised him at the séance, publicly confirmed my statement.

"MATTHEW FIDLER.

"*No. 16, Ely Street, Gateshead,*
25th April, 1880."

"The above report of a séance which we attended on the 21st of March last, at which we distinctly saw and recognised 'Mr. Hugh Biltcliffe,' being a statement of facts of such very great importance, we deemed it a duty that it should be given to the world properly attested. We therefore, subscribe our names and addresses.

"ISABELLA BILTCLIFFE, 13 Peterborough Street, Gateshead.

"GRACE FIDLER, 16 Ely Street, Gateshead.

"MARY ANN HALL, 21 Ellison St., Gateshead.

"*April 25th, 1880.*"

"*Further Testimony as to the Identification of Mr. Hugh Biltcliffe.*

"On Sunday, the 2nd inst., two of Mr. Hugh Biltcliffe's little daughters attended the séance, and were able to say most positively that they saw and recognised their father, who kissed and caressed them. Agnes, a girl of about thirteen years of age, says that she distinctly saw his features, whiskers, and hair, and knew that it was her father whom she saw. Sarah Biltcliffe, a bright, intelligent little girl of seven years, saw him at the same time as her sister, and she threw her arms around his neck when he kissed her. Again, on the 9th inst., Sarah saw her father, and, without a moment's hesitation, went to him, when he took her in his arms and kissed her. She clung to his neck as though she were not going to be parted from him again. Many, many questions did she ask him, such as—'Where did he get all

the white clothes from that he had? What did he do with them when he went away? How did he get into the room? Did I know him? Yes, I knew him! Do you think I do not know my father? But it was my father. How queer it is; he's dead, you know, and he's alive; how's that?' These and a few hundred other queries and remarks puzzle wiser heads than hers; but the wisest would not be able to persuade her that she had not positively seen and kissed her father, who had been dead to her more than a year. This proof of immortality will probably never be effaced from her mind. It shows the advisability of admitting children to séances more frequently than is now done."

The details of Mr. Biltcliffe's recognition deserves some little attention. The combination of personal and characteristic particulars given in the testimony, strongly prove the identity of Mr. Biltcliffe. His noble and majestic figure, his dark whiskers and hair, his soft, warm hand, its vigorous grasp, its well-known shake, and its rather large size, constitute such an assemblage of qualities as the witnesses could scarcely be mistaken as to the bodily reappearance of their departed and esteemed friend. So striking, indeed, was his identity that no sooner did he appear than he was recognised. No laboured examination was required to distinguish his well-known form and features. He was at once identified as the veritable Hugh Biltcliffe. His wife, with intimate knowledge of his form, features, and manner, could scarcely be mistaken as to the reality of her husband. In short, no simulated likeness, however ingenious, could possibly have imposed upon her perceptions. Besides, there were the two children who had no difficulty in knowing their father. His affectionate embrace and kiss after the way in which they were usually given, together with his exact personal appearance, could not fail to impress upon their minds that he was truly their beloved father.

Should the sceptical reader ask the question, Are these witnesses of Mr. Biltcliffe's reappearance trustworthy? Is their testimony reliable? Have they been deceived as to what they saw? Have they really attempted to deceive the world by a false relation? If it can be shown that the witnesses have neither been deceived, nor have attempted to deceive, their evidence must be considered perfectly trustworthy. But have they been deceived? Have they been imposed upon by a false representation? Did the great Arch-enemy of mankind personify Mr. Biltcliffe, and cause them to believe a lie? If so, the Prince of Darkness would, by such an act, be destroying his own kingdom. He would, by such a deception, be strengthening the foundations of virtue and religion. If Jesus has brought "life and immortality to light in the gospel," can we suppose for a moment that the great Tempter has come into the world to proclaim the same blessed truth? If so, the devil must have been converted, and salvation found its way into hell. Such an absurdity no one will believe.

Again, it might be asked, were the witnesses not imposed upon by the medium being so disguised as to resemble Mr. Biltcliffe? Deceptions of this kind have, in some instances, I believe, probably taken place, and which have served to awaken public prejudice and undue suspicion in reference to established truths in Spiritualism. This is neither strange nor new. Counterfeits of the good and the true have been abundant in all ages of the world. But it does not follow that counterfeit was any proof of the falsity of the thing which was counterfeited. A bad half-crown or a bad sovereign is no proof that there are no good ones. Since the death of the Messiah, no fewer than twenty persons have successively declared themselves to be the very Christ. But these impositions do not in any way impair the truths which

Christ taught and exemplified both by his life and his death. If some impostors have appeared as mediums, it does not affect the grand truth of the reappearance of the dead. In the testimony given above, the medium could not have been Mr. Biltcliffe. The large size of his hand showed that he was not the medium under disguise. And, moreover, the medium is usually under test conditions. Some one, perhaps, might imagine that a person resembling Mr. Biltcliffe was so disguised as to be mistaken for this gentleman. If so, he would have been found in the cabinet. The usual way by which the materialised spirit retires is into the cabinet. Sometimes, however, the spirit dematerialises in the very presence of the spectators. The cabinet, for the most part, is a corner of the room so curtained as to leave a space for the medium to sit. All care is taken by the chief persons sitting that this cabinet has no outlet. Every possible measure is adopted to prevent deception.

But some may think that these witnesses though believing what they saw to be Mr. Biltcliffe, may have been deceived by some species of conjuring practised by the medium. It may be stated here, that the medium or mediums present on these occasions are not initiated into the mysteries of such an art. They usually are persons, found among the working classes, possessed of little education, and they are sometimes mere children. Search as strictly and as earnestly as you may both the cabinet and the apartment which contains the former, you will find no cords, wires, or any species of machinery, calculated to impose upon those composing the circle. Examine as closely as you may, you will find no secret door of entrance or of departure. Conjuring on the part of the medium, therefore, is entirely out of the question.

No deceptive arts being employed by the medium, the

evidence of the witnesses as to the reappearance of Mr. Biltcliffe, must therefore be deemed conclusive by every one unprejudiced in mind. They had the testimony of two senses, that of seeing and touching—and convinced that, in the circumstances, there were no artful methods employed to deceive, such clear proof must have been to them irresistible. In such a case, what stronger evidence could be given of the return of their departed friend? Had Mr. Biltcliffe been in earth-life, and had he walked into the midst of the circle, could the evidence of his identification, so far as the evidence of direct testimony was concerned, have been more satisfactory? It was not a dream of the day, nor of the night, neither was it any form of hallucination, nor devilish contrivance—no, it was occular and tangible demonstration. They saw, they felt, they believed a reality—that reality was their honoured and respected friend, Mr. Biltcliffe.

But let us ask the latter question, Have these witnesses attempted to deceive? In the extract to which the names of the four witnesses are attached, there were likewise other persons present on these occasions. At one of these séances, two gentlemen also recognised Mr. Biltcliffe, but doubted the evidence of their senses. Had the reappearance of the departed been an invention intended to deceive, would the two gentlemen have been silent? Would they not have exposed the falsehood? Had they been silent, their silence would have been confirming the falsehood, and making them partakers of it. Can we reasonably suppose that these witnesses with the others, present on both occasions, villainously combined to cheat the world into a lie, which brought them neither honour nor gain? Could they have been so bold and base as to give publicity to conduct so wicked and disgraceful, as to announce it from the platform, and

then all over the world, through a weekly issue of the press? In the extract as given above, the witnesses were not persons of a disreputable character. The writer of the article says that Mr. Biltcliffe was an "esteemed friend" of his, and that he gave him a "fervent shake" of the hand "as an expression of thanks for little services I had rendered him during his illness." The fact that the writer and Mr. Biltcliffe were not only intimate but esteemed friends, implies that the writer was a person of respectability, and above the baseness of proclaiming so vile a falsehood. Had he been of a character so very untruthful as to be guilty of public falsehood, is it likely that Mr. Biltcliffe would have been on intimate terms with him? Is it probable that he would have had liberty of calling upon him during his illness, and doing even little acts of kindness? Could they have been esteemed friends? Impossible, never! Virtue and vice, religion and irreligion, cannot so unite. The writer, who was one of the witnesses, was doubtless a respectable man, and therefore superior to low trickery.

But there is reason to conclude that the other three witnesses were likewise respectable. If the writer, as we have seen, was in all probability a person of considerable respectability, would he have associated his name in so public a manner with the other witnesses had they been of little or no reputation? Most if not all men would feel ashamed to become the companions of the false and the base. We are so formed as to be desirous of the good opinion of our fellow-men. This desire is, indeed a branch of the moral government of God in our nature. If so, there would be a repugnance even to associate our names with those of an indifferent character. It may, therefore, be fairly concluded that the three witnesses were persons of respectability; for had it been otherwise, the writer of the extract would never have associated his name with theirs.

If then, the witnesses were neither deceived nor attempted to deceive, their testimony must be conclusive of the fact, that Mr. Biltcliffe did reappear after his death.

But the sceptical reader is not to suppose that this is all the evidence which can be adduced in favour of the reappearance of the departed. The above is but a drop in the bucket in comparison of what could be brought forward. The literature of Spiritualism, comprising hundreds of volumes, silently testifies that the dead reappear. For more than a quarter of a century streams of periodicals have flowed from the Press, confirmatory of the great truth of man's immortality. These, like a great cloud of witnesses, have gone forth into all the world, and told the blessed news in almost every clime, causing the sceptic to lay aside his dark faith, and to walk in the light of a hopeful immortality.

It is scarcely necessary to direct the attention of the reader to the Word of God in order to confirm the truth of this doctrine of all religion. The teaching of Jesus and his apostles leave no room for doubt as to man's conscious existence beyond the grave. Jesus, addressing his apostles a few hours before his arrest by the ungodly Jew, says—"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." And when dying on the cross, he says to the repentant thief, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, bears witness to the same grand truth, and says, "I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day; and

not to me only, but to all those who love his appearing." In another place, he says that he desired "to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Looking forward to the hour when his body would return to the dust, he solemnly says—"Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For we know that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." These passages, with many others, abundantly show that the doctrine of immortality was taught both by Jesus and his apostles. This fact has never been denied even by the enemies of the Christian faith.

But Jesus and his apostles did not only teach, but also exemplified, the doctrine of immortality. The remarkable fact, recorded by Matthew, took place on "a high mountain apart," and was seen by Peter, James, and John. Moses and Elias, the honoured and devoted servants of God, during their eventful lives on earth, reappeared, and were acknowledged by the three apostles. This return of these two distinguished personages had no doubt an important object to fulfil. Such an appearance of the departed dead was an occular demonstration to the apostolic mind of the blessed truth that man has a conscious existence beyond the grave. Jesus knew that evidence of this kind was necessary to overcome the various forms of scepticism of the age in which he lived, and doubtless foresaw the opposition which, in the course of time, would arise to so grand a doctrine. This séance on the mountain was, most probably, preceded by prayer, and, as many suppose, took place during the night.

If such a demonstration of immortality was required to

overcome the infidelity of that age, and to remove every shadow of doubt which might linger in the minds of the three apostles, does not the age in which we live also require such a demonstration of this great foundation of all religion? Does the preaching of the pulpit overcome the scepticism of the age? Does not infidelity increase? To thousands and tens of thousands, is not the Bible a dead letter? To show that infidelity is on the increase, we take the liberty of quoting an article from the *Christian Herald*, dated October 13, 1880, and which is as follows:—

"There is much," says the writer of this article, "to excite the gravest apprehensions of Christians, and to call for earnest prayer and united effort, in order to stay, if possible, the rising tide of infidelity and iniquity that threatens to engulf all in a common ruin. From a single batch of newspapers that have lately come to hand, the following extracts are clipped, as showing the present direction of public sentiment:—

"The London *Daily Standard* says, 'That Agnosticism will eventually and for ever cover the earth as the waters cover the sea (as its adherents in Germany and at home assure us), is a peril which we deem to be visionary; but that a long and dark eclipse of faith may possibly be before us in the future, there are few bold enough to deny. At all events, one, and the greatest of all the rocks ahead, is this prospect of Atheism among the millions. What will we be like, if we are ever doomed to see it?'

"An anonymous writer in the *North American Review* says, that thinking minds of to-day are drifting away from the religious belief and dogmatic theology of the past, and that the wave of scepticism affects the orthodox church itself. He says, 'The great body of orthodox religious doctrines, known as systematic theology, is about to go to wreck with the mythology of Greece and the belief in witchcraft.' He also marks 'the temporising attitude of theology towards such doctrines as evolution.'

"Dr. B. F. Campbell, of East Boston, in a lecture on

'The Dangers of the Republic,' said—'The world as a whole is undoubtedly growing more intelligent, but not moral. Moral power is on the decline in New England. The pendulum of religious belief has swung away from the rigid orthodoxy of Puritan times, has already passed the centre, and is on its way to a heartless Nihilism.'

"Professor Van Oosterzee, the well-known evangelical teacher of Holland, said recently, that a wave of infidelity is steadily advancing over Protestant Europe, which the most favoured country will not escape. 'They have had it in Germany, and now we have it in Holland. They are beginning to get it in Scotland. In twenty years they will have it to the full, and all their theology will not save them.'

"The Rev. Henry Morgan says:—'The cause of the religious decline in Boston is Liberalism. It has broken down the Sabbath, paralysed the arm of the law; opened Sunday theatres, concerts, and excursions; emptied the churches; killed the public conscience; sown the seeds of distrust; sown to the wind, and we are now reaping the whirlwind.'

"The *N. Y. Herald* quotes the veteran editor of the *Observer* as saying:—'A great spiritual draught is prevailing, such as has not been known in the present century. We do not remember the time,' says Dr. Prime, 'when revivals of religion were so few and so far between—when so few accessions to the churches were reported, and when the church seemed so much in danger of receding before the world.' 'A sombre, but true picture,' says the *Herald*.

"The Rev. Dr. Cuyler, in the *Evangelist*, in a mournful article, asserts that Presbyterianism is on the decline. In 1875, there were 70,500 members added to the churches; in 1877, there were 63,700 added; but in 1878, there were only 53,000 additions; while in 1879 only 49,000 were added, the real increase being only 7,000, and perhaps not even that. What is true of the Presbyterian is true, he says, of all the other evangelical bodies.

"The *Christian Advocate* (New York) writes, 'The *Congregationalist* has received answers from twenty-nine ministers to a circular sent out, making inquiry as to the observance of the Sabbath in New England. All testify to degeneracy,

and deplore results. Desecration has increased; and morality also decreases. Religion is losing its authority; and the state of the community is becoming worse.'

"The Rev. Dr. Kettridge, of Chicago, says:—'It matters not in what direction you look, sin is on the increase, and the Church is losing ground in her conflict with sin. She has almost ceased to be felt as a power. If a majority of our Church organisations were to-day to become extinct, the world would hardly know it.'

"The *Church Union* quotes a circular, issued by most of the ministers of Baltimore, which urges all to prayer, and speaks of the forces of evil, general corruption, Sabbath-breaking, the thickening snares for the young, and adds, 'The growing scepticism, as well as the growing intensely secular spirit of the age, are enough to awaken apprehension for our institutions, and the social fabric itself.'

"The Rev. T. T. Waterman, writing to the *Nonconformist* and *Independent*, on the progress of infidelity, says of one of the infidel societies:—'It was officially stated in February last, that it is now stronger in members than at any period of its existence; that more new members have been enrolled during the past three years than in the previous six years; that its lecturers are more active, its meetings more numerous, and its executive more united than ever. Since then, I have read that, five years ago, there were only 300 members, now there are 6000 on the books; and for every member there are 1000 adherents.'

"A German statesman has written to Herr Karl Sarazin:—'Our citizens, with few exceptions, have totally lost the religious basis on which their conceptions of duty and morality rested.' What wonder is it that, along with so marked an increase of infidelity, there should have been a corresponding increase of crime, so that in 1878 there were 600,642 prisoners whose career had to be investigated; while in 1875, there were only 34,882."

If, then, in the most civilised parts of the world, religion and morality are languishing, and infidelity and sin are increasing, do we not require such demonstrations of immortality as that demonstration which took

place on the mountain in the presence of Peter, James, and John? If there be anything more powerful than another to overcome the wave of scepticism and vice, it is the evidence of the senses as to the return of the dead. In most, if not in all cases, infidelity has its chief foundations in the disbelief of the soul's conscious existence beyond the grave. When the sceptic has this basis of his unbelief removed by the testimony of his senses, and knows as a certainty that the dead do return, he is not far from the kingdom of God and its righteousness. By such testimony, many have laid aside their scepticism, believed in the gospel, and become followers of the lowly Nazarene. Multitudes of professing Christians who have been disturbed, even tortured with doubts and fears with respect to the soul's conscious existence after death, have had them totally removed by the reappearance of departed friends. The mother who has wept and mourned for the loss of a dear girl or boy, has had her sorrows soothed, her heart comforted and cheered by once more beholding the object of her undying love. On the border line which separates the two worlds, the widow has met her husband, and been consoled; the orphans have beheld their dear father, and have enjoyed his affectionate embraces; and both widow and orphans have thanked God for so great a blessing. Many, too, over whose minds the prospect of death shed a melancholy gloom, have had the darkness dispersed by sensible and certain proofs of immortality. They know and are assured that the principle within them, which thinks, judges, and reasons—which loves, wills, and rejoices—yea, that principle within them which feared death—does not die, but begins a new life that knows no end. Following "the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*," embodying the excellences of the *Prince of Peace* in their daily walk and conversation, they "know

that if their earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, they have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Such facts, such knowledge, such certain prospects of a blessed immortality, sweeten the path of earthly life, inspire the mind with joy, and shed a bright and heavenly light over "the valley of the shadow of death," and enable the dying pilgrim to say, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

If such, then, have been the blessed effects of Spiritualism on the character of sceptics and many professing Christians, would it be unscriptural or unadvisable for Christian communities to adopt this agency, in order to stem the torrent of infidelity and vice, which threaten to overwhelm in their gloomy depths the sacred ark of heavenly truth? From what has already been said, it might be considered advisable on the part of the Church to employ this spiritual agency, in order to oppose the onward march of an enemy so destructive to Christian truth. Whatever has its basis in truth—whatever is found to advance the substantial comfort, the moral interests, or the permanent well-being of man, ought, when properly considered and understood, to be received with feelings of gratitude by every follower of the humble Nazarene.

All men, indeed, act upon this principle. The Christian, how strict and stringent soever he may be in adhering to the dogmas of his sect, feels no difficulty in adopting any honest improvement which is made in the course of his business. If any of his workmen is deficient in morals or skill, he finds no difficulty in replacing him by others better fitted to accomplish his designs. Should any new or useful invention commend itself to his intelligence, and appear suitable to his department of trade, and to widen the sphere of his interests and speculations, he has no hesitation, if the means

are at hand, of taking it into his service. The mechanic, the artist, the merchant, the statesman, and the philosopher will, if circumstances allow, endeavour to carry out this principle. But should Christian communities pursue a different course of action? Do they neglect the means which would strengthen and extend their religious views? Are there ignorance, drunkenness, and infidelity in the village or town? To overcome these enemies of the truth, tracts are circulated, Sabbath-schools are formed, lectures are given, and missionaries are employed. From what has already been said in favour of Spiritualism and its blessed effects, would it not then be advisable for all Christian communities to employ this mysterious agency, in order to stop the onward march of enemies which neither the pulpit nor Bible, nor the religious issues of the Press, are able to subdue? Do not reason and morality and religion unite their voices and say that it is advisable to employ this supermundane power—a power which demonstrates immortality, destroys one of the great strongholds of infidelity, which comforts the mourner, dissipates the fear of death, and has for its object the love of God and the best interests of the human family? Would not such an auxiliary be in perfect harmony with the general principle acted upon by all evangelical bodies? Would such an alliance despoil the tree of life of any of its life-giving fruits? If rightly used, and not abused, as many of the blessed truths of Jesus have been, it will neither adulterate nor destroy any of the teachings of the loving and lowly Nazarene. The adoption of Spiritualism by Christians does not therefore appear unadvisable.

But would the adoption of Spiritualism by professing Christians be *scriptural?* Is there any direct and positive passage in the New Testament which can prove the affirma-

tive of this question? Could such a passage be found, it would settle, or ought to settle, the question between the Spiritualist and the divine; but should such a direct and positive scripture not be found, would Spiritualism prayerfully used and not abused, as many of God's blessings have been, be at variance with the teachings of Christ and his apostles? No; the absence of such a scripture would be no proof that it was in opposition to the blessed truths for which the Redeemer lived and died. Is there any direct and positive passage from the New Testament as proof for the formation of Sabbath-schools, for the institution of Bible Societies, for the holding of Bazaars, and for many other schemes. Yet these are considered to be in harmony with evangelical truth, though no direct passage from the New Testament can be adduced in favour of their adoption. It does not therefore follow, though there were no verses either from the Gospels or the Epistles directly in support of Spiritualism, that it would be at variance with Evangelical truth. An instrumentality which demonstrates immortality, dissipates the fear of death, comforts the mourner, destroys the great stronghold of infidelity and vice, and teaches man to follow the footsteps of the meek and lowly Jesus, has claims upon the Christian professor surely as great as Sabbath-schools, Bible Societies, and showy bazaars. If the one class of objects is in accordance with the spirit of the gospel, is the other class of objects less in accordance with the spirit of the gospel?

But is there any passage in God's Word which would give authority, or serve as an example, for the practice of Spiritualism? If the affirmative of this question can be shown, professors of every religious denomination ought to lay aside their opposition and identify themselves with such a practice. In the brief narrative of the transfiguration, as

recorded by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, there appear the leading features characteristic of modern séances. At the close of day, when the shadows of evening fell over Galilee, Jesus, with his three beloved disciples—Peter, James, and John—climbed the mountain side to hold communion with God. Such was the usual custom of our Lord when he had finished the labours of the day. After the Great Medium had poured out his deep and strong desires to his Almighty Father, a strange and extraordinary spectacle appeared. The face of Jesus glowed like the sun; his apparel became white as the snow; a bright cloud overshadowed him, and, stranger than all, the dead reappeared. Moses who had led the hosts of Israel to the border of the promised land, and John the Baptist, who suffered martyrdom for reproving the royal adulterer, stood in the midst of this little band of Spiritualists. They beheld with astonishment both the great lawgiver of the Jews, and the hardy forerunner of the Messianic reign. During the course of this séance, the three disciples also heard a mysterious conversation between the two materialised spirits and their beloved Master, Jesus. Finally, a voice came from the luminous cloud which overshadowed them, saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him."

In this brief account of the Evangelists, the chief elements of the modern séance appear. There is the Medium, Jesus; there are the sitters; there is the going apart; there is the quietude of the mountain; there are the materialised spirits of the dead; there are heard the voices of these holy ones; and there is also the wonderful change which took place in the appearance of the Great Medium. To these the leading features of the modern séance bears a striking resemblance. There is the medium; there are the sitters; there is the going apart; there is the quietude of

the house or hall; there are the materialised spirits of the dead; there are heard the voices of the departed; and there is sometimes also a wonderful change in the appearance of the medium. Darkness is another feature in which the two séances are like each other, as the one on the mountain top is generally considered to have been a night séance. And in addition, as the one was preceded by prayer, so the other is often preceded by prayer. The correspondence existing between them is certainly very remarkable. Had there been anything in these manifestations on the mountain, in opposition to the purity of divine truth, or at variance with the spirit of holiness, Jesus and his three disciples would never have set such an example before the world. He who was the purest, the wisest, and the most excellent of men, who could look into the distant future, and read the pages of the world's history, and, finally, gave up his spotless life to benefit and bless his fellow-men, was not likely to give an example of anything which would prove injurious to those whom he came to save. It is quite the contrary. Every act of the Great Master has been a blessing to man. He has, indeed, ever been esteemed by his followers as the perfect pattern of a holy life and of a self-sacrificing death. Can it then be either unrighteous or unscriptural to follow the example of one so distinguished for wisdom, goodness, and piety? Can the Christian err in doing that which Jesus and Peter and James and John did on the top of the mountain? If converse with the materialised spirits of the dead was in accordance with the spirit of Jesus, it cannot be wrong in any of his followers to follow his blessed example: yea, to follow his example is not only right, but is the duty, the happiness, and the joy of every believer in the Saviour. To hold communion with the spirits of the departed is scriptural, having the authority both of Jesus and his three elect apostles.

If, then, infidelity and consequent vice are making progress so rapidly and extensively in these kingdoms, would it not be both advisable and scriptural to employ an agency which is calculated to destroy the great stronghold of so dangerous an enemy, which neither the pulpit, the church, nor the press can successfully oppose? If ever there was a time in which some powerful instrumentality should be called into exercise in order to combat the evils which menace the Christian faith, it certainly is the time in which we now live. Hear what Sir John Holker, M.P., the late Attorney-General, speaking at Preston, says—"There is one characteristic of this seething, throbbing age of excitement which is very alarming." (He alluded to the advance of scepticism upon religious subjects, and to the rapid advance of positive infidelity.) "It is an appalling feature, and if infidelity advanced with anything like the rapid strides which it had made up to the present time, it must result in the destruction of the Church which was so dear to them, and the undoing and breaking up of all bonds by which society was held together." In such a state of things, would it be unwise on the part of Christian professors to adopt some measure by which they might be able to uphold their sinking cause? If the respectable and pious merchant be convinced that his speculations in trade are likely to terminate in bankruptcy, he will gladly avail himself of any just and legal measure by which he can prevent so undesirable an event. Should the follower of Jesus be less prudent in the management of the heavenly treasure with which he has been entrusted? Should he allow himself to become bankrupt when the means of continuing solvent are at hand? When Spiritualism, rightly interpreted and prayerfully used, teaches man to love God supremely, to love his neighbour as himself, to advance the temporal and eternal well-being

of his fellow-creatures, and to follow the footsteps of the loving Saviour, can the Christian have any objection to identify himself with such a blessed ally? Already, throughout the different parts of the world, Spiritualists can be counted by the thousand, yea, by the million; and amongst its advocates and sympathisers are found not only the working man, but the doctor, the lawyer, the minister, the philosopher, the statesman, and many of the aristocracy. So rapid and extraordinary has been the progress of this wonderful agency as to awaken the prejudices and stir up the hostility of the pulpit and the religious press, perhaps ignorantly concluding that their craft was in danger. The pure and beautiful truths taught by the blessed Saviour, and founded as they are on eternal truth, will continue to shed their heavenly light through all future ages of the world. True it may be, that, in the course of time, the traditions, dogmas, and inventions of the priesthood may be swept away; but the pure and genuine truths taught by Jesus shall remain.

CONCLUSION.

IF, then, the evidence which has been advanced in favour of man's immortality is of a perfectly conclusive kind, no other subject of deeper importance can occupy the human mind. Think of it, dear reader. Can you count the years of a soul when it has passed the valley of shadows? Can you number the blades of grass which have grown through all ages of the past on the face of this beautiful world? Can you count the leaves of the forests of all time? Can you count the sands on the sea-shore, the drops of the ocean, the atoms in the sunbeams, or number the years of the Almighty One? The task is beyond your calculation. The highest form of your figures shrinks into insignificance. In vain imagination exerts her power, and strives to reach some boundary line, but she can find no rest for the sole of her foot. If, with the aid of Gabriel and the angels, you could give a satisfactory reply to all these questions, and the efforts of your imagination could prove successful, even then you would fall infinitely short of the years of the soul's conscious existence beyond the grave. The monuments of man's greatness and power may crumble into the dust, the moon may cease to wander through the clouds of the evening, the sun himself may grow old and dim with years and the stars may forget their courses through the sky, but the soul shall live, and be as everlasting as the hand which gemmed it with immortality.

If such, then, is the duration of the soul, what ought to

be the moral attitude of man during his earthly life? This is a question in which all are concerned. There are no exceptions. The rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the prince and the peasant, are equally interested. As all are endowed with the power of doing good or of doing evil, all are responsible both to God and their fellow-men for the manner in which they exercise that power. The laws of all nations, as well as those of the Creator, speak plainly enough, and say that every one has a duty to discharge—a duty to himself, a duty to his neighbour, and a duty to his God. It is in the discharge, or the non-discharge of these responsibilities in which lies his happiness or his misery, whether in this life or in that which is to come. This is a grave fact which experience, history, and religion have abundantly shown; and just in proportion to the extent of obedience or of disobedience, which any one renders to the laws that governs his nature, will be the measure of his happiness or his misery. This is absolutely and finally true. Many judge differently, many act differently; many think that there are paths to happiness shorter and pleasanter by far, paths which are paved with the spirit of the world and the flesh. The paths which lead to misery, it is true, are prefaced with pleasing attractions. Their entrance looks like beds of palatial flowers, and the unwary one is ready to conclude that he has found a new Eden in which grows the tree of every enjoyment. The young, specially, look forward into earthly life, and see its sky glowing with meteors of delight. Onward, and still onward, they follow these lights which their own imaginations have set up, and at last find to their cost that they have been led into the bog of disappointment and sin, and, instead of happiness, they have found to their mortification the bitter waters of misery. Beware, dear reader, of indulging impure

feelings, of fostering envious thoughts, and corrupting imaginations, and of giving the rein to angry and revengeful passions.

As sure as the winds of Autumn toss the leaves of the forest—as sure as the tides of the ocean follow the trail of the moon, so sure will misery follow the dark path of the evil-doer. God says it. Conscience says it. Human experience says it. Man is so formed by the Creator, and bound by the laws of his nature, that every act of sin must meet, even in this life, a certain degree of punishment. If there are laws which govern the bodies and souls of men, any deviation from these laws must be followed by pain. To deviate from such laws is to deviate from the laws of God's wisdom and goodness, and to bring upon the transgressor bodily disease, shortness of life, and affliction of mind. Have not the cries, the groans, and the heartrending wail of the multitude, from the dawn of man's existence, ascended to heaven as proofs of human misery by the breach of divine law? Every law has in itself the principle of life and the principle of death. If obeyed, it is life; if disobeyed, it is death. It is happiness, if you are led by its golden chain; it is misery, if you snap it asunder. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he reap. He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." Does the reader wish to have some evidence of these statements? Their truth is not confined to any class of society, but extends to all mankind. Riches, and honours, and high position, are no protection from the misery which follows the breach of Divine law. Here, the spade is as good as the sceptre, and the rags of the beggar as protective as the robes of the queen. Where vice reigns, no human device can secure from the curse of

misery. Here, the sage with all his science has no privilege beyond the simple son of the soil. Great knowledge and mental power are no defences from the evils of a sinful life. Dear reader, whether you are learned or unlearned—whether you are a philosopher or a clown, whether your income is by pounds or by pence a-day, can you deny these truths so commonly felt to be true? Call up the memories of your past life, weigh them in the balances of conscience and Divine law, and listen with impartial ears to the gravity of their testimony. What does the still, small voice within you say? What does the law of God testify? What do the beautiful teachings of the lowly Nazarene say? Do they not all unite their voices, and whisper in your ears the solemn truth, that your sinful experience was followed by a proportionate measure of bodily or mental pain? Yes, my reader, you know to a certainty, and you know it to your cost, that your wrong-doing has been to you the cause of much misery and distress. Whether you have waded in the deep or in the shallow waters of iniquity—whether you have walked in the twilight or the midnight of error, you have not escaped, and you cannot escape the just punishment due to the one and due to the other. There is an an exact price set on every evil deed according to its character; or if you will, there is a table of prices for the workers of iniquity. Here, that price is paid either to the inward or the outward man.

Thus to trample on Divine law, thus to set at nought the wisdom of the Most High, thus to sit in the seat of the scorner and the fool, is surely unworthy the dignity of an immortal soul. The beautiful robe of immortality, with which God has adorned and dignified the human soul, a fabric woven by the hands of infinite wisdom and love, was never intended to be soiled, polluted, and debased by the

follies and vices of the world, but to be pure and heavenly like the garments which clothe the lily of the valley. Does it become a creature made to outlive the daughter of the night, that wends her solitary way through the cloudy thickets of the evening sky, to creep through every filthy gutter of meanness, iniquity, and hypocrisy, in order to gain the petty advantages which fortune and favour can bestow? Is not such a prostitution of the immortal soul sufficient to make the angels weep, to cast a cloud of sorrow over the hearts of departed saints, and to clothe the mansion of bliss in weeds of woe? Was it not an outrage on the dignity and purity of the immortal soul which made the sun flee for shelter among the thick darkness of Judea, when the guilty and revengeful Jew desecrated the holiness of his land by the crucifixion of the Messiah? And have not the consequences of that outrage followed the scattered race for more than eighteen hundred years? Dear reader, sinner, sceptic, or scorner, guilty and polluted you may be, with the help of God raise yourself from the miserable depths into which you have fallen to the dignity of your immortal nature. Walk no longer in the counsel of the ungodly; stand no more in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scorner. Separate yourself from these enemies of your peace, and seek for companions who are on their way to the New Jerusalem. Walk in the counsel of Jesus, stand in the way of the Great Nazarene, and take your seat on Calvary by the side of the Crucified One. Read, meditate, and treasure up in your soul the pure, the beautiful, the heart-searching doctrines which fell from the lips of Him who loved you even unto death. Let the heavenly truth find a resting-place not only in your head but also in your heart. Let the blessed truths of Jesus flow not only from your lips but also from your life. Having accepted Jesus as your Saviour, your

model, and the foundation of your strength, tell the world by your *conduct* that you have been born again, that you are a new creature in Christ, that you have passed from death unto life. Let not your dealings with your fellow-men belie your Christian character. Be not a wolf in sheep's clothing. Never let the enemy say that it is harder to deal with the Christian than with the man of the world. Wear not the veil of hypocrisy, nor let the desire of gain or the applause of the multitude ever induce you to follow the footpath of Judas, and betray your Lord's cause with a treacherous kiss. Let your shop, your office, or the place of your business be a Sanctuary, a Bethel, devoted to truth, justice, and humanity, yea, to all that is in accordance with the spirit of Jesus. Be firm, steadfast, and immoveable. "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand, there fore, having your loins girt about with truth, and put on the breastplate of righteousness: and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith wherewith you may be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." Such ought to be the attitude of an immortal soul.

Dear reader, is this your attitude? Is it otherwise? Have the desire of riches, the eagerness of earthly distinction, or the pleasures of the world so engaged your heart that you have entirely neglected the great end of your being? Have you treated with coldness and indifference the teachings of him who loved you even unto death? Have you indeed forgotten him who has been the founda-

tion of all your enjoyments? Miserable man! Miserable ingratitude! Should not your first of all duties be to Him who gave you life? Are not all the advantages and privileges which this world can bestow the gift of his loving heart? And may not all the blessed promises of a happy immortality be yours by obedience to the gospel of the loving Jesus? If you have hitherto trodden the path of death; courted destruction, and been dead to the calls of Jesus and the rewards of the righteous, are you not chargeable with the greatest of all follies, yea, with the worst of all lunacies? Is it wise, is it your interest, is it your real happiness to prefer the temporal for the eternal—to reject the pure, the solid, the everlasting joys of heaven for the vain, the foolish, the counterfeit pleasures of an hour? Think, reflect, decide. Before your eye leaves this page, or your hand lays aside this little work, resolve in the strength of God to forsake the dark path of sin, a path which has brought you nothing and that can bring you nothing but misery and woe. Do not say, I will wait till to-morrow. Presume not on what is not yours: it belongs to God: and ere the sun shall announce the footsteps of another day thousands of your fellow-men shall have passed the valley of death. For aught you can know, to-morrow, instead of beholding you in life, may bear witness of your folly, presumption, and death. Millions of the departed now curse the hour in which they were led to say, I will wait till to-morrow. Were you to enter the region of woe, and were you to ask the millions of the miserable what was it that brought them to that place of darkness, they would shout in a voice of thunder, I will wait till to-morrow. If the tear of sorrow could kiss the cheek of Gabriel; if the archangels could clothe themselves in weeds of woe, if those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of

the Lamb could feel their hearts wrung with anguish as they gathered round the throne, it would be, dear reader, to hear you say, I will wait till to-morrow.

But if the good providence of God were to fulfil your desire, and bless you with the morning of another day, would you be in a better condition to accept the Saviour, and to walk in the footsteps of his love? Will to-morrow carry in its bosom an enchanting power that will turn you from darkness to light, from a life of sin and misery to a life of holiness and happiness? To-morrow has in it less of converting power than its fairer sister of to-day. "To-day," says the Spirit, "if ye will hear my voice, harden not your heart;" "Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation." If the state of your mind be of such a description that you will not now give up your heart to God, be assured that you will be in worse condition when to-morrow arrives. Evil, if not checked, is progressive, and daily gains strength. The longer that a plant grows it takes a deeper hold of the earth, and is more difficult to be pulled up from the soil. So is it with every species of evil: it grows, it strengthens, and finally becomes immovable. If so, your capability of quitting the path of evil is greater to-day than it will be to-morrow, greater this hour, this minute, this moment, than it will be in any of those that will succeed. If your present state of mind will not now decide to leave the path of death, be assured that another day will aggravate the evil, and add to your unwilling state of mind. If ever you mean to turn over a new leaf in your life, now, even just now, is the most favourable point of time. Reason, experience, and the Word of God unite their voices, and cry aloud, and say, "now," "to-day." Your intelligence, your conscience, your happiness, here and hereafter, combine their testimony, and say, "now," "to-day." Could your ear catch

the voices of your departed friends, you would hear one and all of them say, "now," "to-day." Were it possible to collect the evidence of heaven, and earth, and hell, it would solemnly say, "Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." "To-day if ye will hear my voice, harden not your heart."

Dear reader, if you are prepared to walk no longer in the way of sinners, and to sit no more in the seat of scorners, you must not rest on your good intentions and resolutions. These will not avail you in the hour of trial. They will become as tow that touches the fire. You must go out of yourself, and feed on the rich pastures of the Good Shepherd, and be led by the still waters of his love. God's Word must be read, studied, and believed. The grand truths taught by Jesus must have a firm foundation, not only in your head, but likewise in your heart. You must *feel* the love of God in the gift of Jesus—I say you must *feel* this divine power in the very depths of your nature, constraining you to live no longer to yourself, but to him that loved you and gave himself for you. Be assured, perfectly assured, dear reader, that the truth of God in Jesus, if prayerfully studied, clearly understood, and trustingly received, will impart to you a peace, a satisfaction, a joy, that all your worldly pleasures have failed to give. This is no fable, no dream of the night, no illusion of the fancy. Millions who now stand before the throne of God can testify to this grand glorious reality; and nameless thousands have borne witness of this fact even amidst the torments and fires of persecution. That the power of God's truth in Jesus can produce this blessed state of mind is abundantly shown by living multitudes who have believed in the Saviour. Ask any of them the question, Have the good tidings given you a peace, a satisfaction, a joy, which the pleasures of the

world could not bestow? The ready reply would be given, I never was happy till I believed in Jesus; for now I have found in him a blessed peace which the world could not give. Such is the language and testimony of all who have felt the power of the heavenly truth. God knows that the reception of the gospel into the heart will give spiritual life to all that are dead in trespasses and sins. God who has a perfect knowledge of the human heart, has, in his infinite wisdom and love, revealed through Jesus such a message to man which, if received into the heart, must turn the world from darkness to light, from wickedness to holiness of life. Never would infinite wisdom have given to man a gospel which, if believed, was not calculated to change his heart, save his soul, and satisfy the highest aspirations of his spiritual nature. If the message of love by the Saviour was destitute of this power, God would only be amusing and mocking his creatures with a useless toy. This cannot be. All God's works prove that it cannot be. Human experience shows that it cannot be.

With all confidence, then, dear reader, in the converting power of Divine Truth, lose not a day or an hour, but go into the pasture ground of the Good Shepherd, humbly travelling upon your knees as most befitting a sinful and needy creature. In the green pastures of heavenly truth you will find such nourishment as will satisfy your whole spiritual nature, and give you a joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Hear the sweet music of the inspired bard as he sings a song of Zion:—

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The

fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward."

Hear again the blessed words that flow from David's lips:

"The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him in truth. He will fulfil the desire of all them that fear him; he also will hear their cry, and will save them. The Lord preserveth them that love him; but all the wicked will he destroy."

"The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times."

"Wait upon the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart; wait, I say, upon the Lord."

"The Lord will give strength unto his people; the Lord will bless his people with peace."

"Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues."

"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; but him that trusteth in the Lord mercy shall compass. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart."

"How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O Lord! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life."

"Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him."

"Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive: and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: he will make all his bed in his sickness."

"Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High; and call upon him in the day of trouble: he will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify him."

"My soul, wait thou only upon God: for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence: I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength; my refuge is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us."

"The righteous shall be glad in the Lord, and shall trust in him; and all the upright in heart shall glory."

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."

"Let those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: and let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified."

"Let my mouth be filled with thy praise, and with thine honour all the day."

"I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

"Blessed are the people who know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength; and in thy favour shall their horn be exalted. For the Lord is their defence, and the Holy One of Israel is their King."

"The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: they shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that are planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of their God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing."

"For the Lord is good: his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations."

"The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children, to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them."

"The Lord taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds."

"Praise God in his sanctuary. Praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him in his mighty acts. Praise him according to his excellent greatness."

Having tasted the sweets of Zion, go now, dear reader, into the green pastures of the Messiah, foretold by the Evangelical Prophet, the poetic son of Amoz, and feed thy soul on the beautiful fields of Divine love. Hear him, as his prophetic eye passes over the roll of ages:—

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of

Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord."

"Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

"He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."

"Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed."

"Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth out the wine fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me."

"Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat: yea, come buy wine and milk, without money and without price."

"Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto

the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

Hear now, dear reader, the blessed truths from the lips of the Son of God :—

"My words they are spirit, and they are life."

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live."

"I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, if a man keep my saying, *he shall* never see death."

"I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and go in and out, and find pasture."

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

"Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

"Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

"While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness."

"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself: but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak; and I know that his commandment is life everlasting."

"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me."

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."

Feeding, dear reader, on these and other blessed truths, the heavenly pasturage of the Son of God, your soul will

enjoy a peace unknown to the men of the world. And when you have come to the close of this life, the valley of the shadow of death will have no fears: for the staff of the Good Shepherd will give you all comfort and strength. You then will be enabled to triumph in the last hour, in the sure and certain hope that you will dwell in the house of God for ever, and rejoice in the "inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

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